September 2023 - Communion Service

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Date: 17 September 2023

Preacher: Rev. Colin F. Macleod

[0:00] Well, in your Bibles, if you would turn with me for a time to 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Corinthians 15, where we have this magnificent summary of the gospel. It's precise, it's concise, perhaps that's the best word to use. Then from chapter 15 and verse 3, where Paul, drawing this magnificent letter to a close, gives this incredible summary of the gospel of God.

I delivered to you, he says, to the church, as of first importance, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas.
Then to the twelve, then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time. What a precise summary of the gospel of God this really is. Sometimes I find great encouragement just in reminding myself of passages that we read from this morning in Acts and here in 1 Corinthians, of how the apostles set about the business of making Jesus known. We have that beautiful picture recorded for us of what Philip did and how he dealt with the Ethiopian politician when he met him in the middle of nowhere, guided there by the Spirit. And he said, do you understand what you're reading? As he was reading Isaiah 53, he said, how can I understand? Unless someone explains it to me.
And he got up into the chariot and did what? He told him the good news about Jesus. That's what drove the apostles. That's what was the foundation of apostolic preaching of the cross.
It was their making Jesus known and telling the good news about Jesus. So just again, to dip into just a couple of examples of this style of preaching that's so encouraging this morning, let me read to you just a few verses from the Acts of the Apostles. Acts chapter 2 and in verse 23, we have this very clear emphasis in how Peter addressed the crowds in the day of Pentecost.
[2:13] Men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth. That's where he starts. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourself know. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. The opening sentences of Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost, the person of Christ, that Christ died for our sins and that Christ has risen from the dead.

And that's what I hope we will reflect upon this morning before gathering together at the Lord's table. Acts again, chapter 3 and in verse 14, we have Peter preaching again, you denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you. That was Barabbas, when he said to the crowds called for Barabbas. And you killed the author of life whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong who you see and know. And the faith that is through Jesus has given man this perfect health in the presence of you all. There had been a miracle of healing. A lame beggar had been given back the ability to walk. And the apostles turned immediately to the Persian and finished work of Jesus Christ. And just one last incident in chapter 4 and in verse 10 of Acts again, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.
So the emphasis in the preaching of the apostles as the church begins to step out from the shadows of Judaism, from all the types and promises and the foretelling of the Old Testament to the realization and fulfillment that we now see in the New Testament, in the person and work of Jesus, they emphasize again and again and again that Jesus is the Son of God, that Jesus came into the world to seek and to save the lost, and to do so he died and has been raised from the dead.
And that's what we find here in Paul's summary, one that he wrote to a church planted years later, many years after the day of Pentecost. But we have the same message, the same emphasis.
I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received. That tells us something today, friends, and we remind ourselves that the church is merely a custodian of the gospel.

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[4:58] We do not lord it over the gospel. We are not masters of the gospel. We are servants of the gospel. We are to proclaim the gospel of God that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

I delivered to you as of first importance what I received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. So Paul here has been writing many, many chapters to encourage, nurture, teach, and guide the Christian church. It's been riven by uncertainty. There's been division. There's been argument. There's pressures from within, and there's persecution from without.
And he brings them right here to the heart of the matter, the pulse of the gospel. And there it is. It's Christ who died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, which is why today we gather.
We gather in hope and joy and anticipation to worship a living Savior who was dead, but now is alive. So I want us to think about that for our time this morning together as we prepare to share in the Lord's Supper. Why such an importance, why such an emphasis in this summary of the gospel in chapter 15 of this letter? Well, it continues from the similar emphasis that we've seen from the day of Pentecost, as Jesus himself said in the Great Commission, go into all the world and make disciples, teaching all things that I've commanded you. And so we make disciples by sharing the gospel by asserting, maintaining, and defending the gospel of God that Christ Jesus is the Savior of sinners. As the apostles would say in Acts, it is through this man that is preached to you the forgiveness of sins. And so we seek clarity in this. Yes, conviction, and we want to have a delivery that is resounding and that is lively, that's engaging, but above all truthful and clear that Christ Jesus died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. This was an important emphasis at this point in the history and story of the church, because in Corinth, where this church was based, where all these young Christians were living, there was a powerful, skeptical philosophy that was kind of just ingrained in the thinking of the people that to think of resurrection was crazy. And so to speak of resurrection from the dead was anathema to the thinking schools of the day. And they came in and they did all they could to undermine both the message and the messenger. They said, how can you believe this? And then they turned their fire against Paul and said, well, how can you be impressed with him? He's not a great orator. He doesn't have anything good about him. He's just this Jewish intellectual. So they attacked the message and the messenger, and the devil has always done this.
[7:56] That will never change. He will always attempt to undermine and discredit both the gospel and those who proclaim it and those who say Jesus is Lord. And so we anticipate that attack. Corinth as a Greek city was in the grip of this philosophical reasoning that rejected any notion of resurrection. And that's why we have such an emphasis of it here in chapter 15, verse 12.

If Christ has proclaimed this race from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? The thinking of the world was beginning to impact and infect the church. It was creeping in from outwith into the hearts and minds of believers thinking, well, maybe there isn't a resurrection.
If there is no resurrection, Paul goes on to say, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We see where the devil is going with this. He's beginning to question the resurrection and whisper his lies and deceit and his wiles and his trickery into the hearts of believers to say, well, do you really need a resurrection from the dead?
That's a bit of a push, isn't it? That's a bit of a stretch. No one's going to accept that. People won't like that. Maybe you can just park that to the side. Paul says we can't. If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and our faith is in vain. Why? Because Christ would still be in the grave.
And that's where the devil wants Christ today, in the grave. That's where the world wants the church, in the grave, in the past, bygones, in the shadows. You've had your day. You've made a great contribution to society. You've given us a moral compass and a foundation that's full of great virtue and value.
[9:39] But you know what? We've got this now. We don't need God. We don't need the gospel. We don't need Christ. We don't need the cross. We don't need forgiveness for sin. We've got this. And this is the message of humanism and secularism and atheism that is resounding loud and clear in modern, contemporary Scotland today. It's everywhere. We don't need to cross the minch. It's here, loud and proud, that we don't need Jesus. We've got this, because man has enthroned self

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and dethroned God and refused to acknowledge God and refuses to bow the knee before God.

We began singing to again Psalm 95, where there's that exuberance in worship and praise, where we raise our voices and we sing with joy and melody. But then it comes to that point where there needs to be, O come, let us worship him. Let us bow down with all, and on our knees before the Lord, our maker, let us fall. And so in our hearts we bow the knee. We give thanks for this great plan of redemption that has been revealed to us. The Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world to what? To be slain. And that's what we have here in Paul's deliverance. First, I delivered to you as of first importance. What does that mean? I think that links back to where these famous verses at the beginning of the letter, chapter 2, I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my speech and my message were not implausible words of wisdom, but a demonstration of the spirit and of power that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.
And now here he is saying, I deliver to you as of first importance. He made the emphasis that what he came to them to do was preach Christ and him crucified. And what was his message?
For the remaining time, I want us to think about this in this way. First of all, he focuses very much upon the death of Christ. And that's why we're here today to especially remember the death of Christ.
We have the table set, the elements will be offered and shared among the Lord's people soon. Why? To remember the death of Christ. And that's where Paul begins. So let's begin there, first of all, and think about the death of Jesus was promised. That's where he begins in this incredible, precise summary. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scripture. There's the first sentence of his summary of the gospel of God. And it's good to use that language. And sometimes I have to have a word with myself that I'm not using enough scriptural language in speaking of the gospel.
[12:32] Paul spoke of the gospel as being—let me just read to you the first few sentences of his great letter to the Romans. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, the good news of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets and in the holy scriptures, concerning his son who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness. How? How, Paul, was Jesus declared to be the son of God in power? By his resurrection from the dead. That's how. The gospel of God has at its heart this emphasis, this necessity of the death of Jesus. His death then was promised. That's where Paul begins his summary as he concludes this magnificent letter to build up and encourage and nourish the church. The message then has been given to us, not created by us, and neither is it subject to us. We must never make that mistake in our thinking. No. The gospel is neither a discussion nor a debate. It is God's declaration. And that is why Paul would say, I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to salvation to all who believe. And that's why he refers to it in that way as the gospel of God. A number of times throughout his letters we have that wonderful phrase, the gospel of God. The good news of Jesus Christ his Son having come into the world, and yet this good news centers upon and focuses upon his death. His death. There's not a message or a religion in the world that comes close to this. The death of the deliverer. And that's what we have here. I deliver to you as a first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance to the Scriptures.

Now, what we need to remember is that Paul didn't have time to write out everything. And so, when it comes to a summary statement, what we have is, if you like, the meat, the heart of things. And that's where he goes. He goes to the heart of the gospel. He goes to the very necessity of the death of Christ and the fulfillment of God's eternal plan of salvation, the death of his Son. This death was promised. So, everything we know about Jesus, everything we proclaim about Jesus, we find set forth in the Scriptures. That's where he goes. The death of Christ for our sins was in accordance with the Scriptures. The fulfillment is now. It was looking forward. We find the Old Testament straining and looking forward in anticipation. But now, in the New Testament, we find proclamation. The time has come. The gospel is here. Repent and believe the good news. The hour is fulfilled. And time and again, in the lead up to the cross, we find Jesus saying, the hour has not yet come. The hour has not yet come. And then, finally, the hour has come. And he institutes the Lord's Supper. And he gives us the command and instruction as to how we conduct ourselves this

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morning in the bread and in the wine. And he did that the night he was betrayed. The night he was to be taken under arrest and beaten and scourged and abused and mocked.
And then led out to Golgotha and crucified to death. He institutes the Lord's Supper that very night that we would remember his death till he comes. This death then was promised. And in the fulfillment, in accordance with the Scripture, what we find is the fulfillment of promise. The fulfillment of promise. I remember seeing a delivery van once a number of years ago, but its slogan on the side was so good, I've never forgot it. It was a delivery company. I don't know, I can't remember the name of the company. It's just a slogan, I remember. And it said, a promise is nothing until it's delivered. I thought that was a superb slogan that said, this is our business. What we're about is getting your business to your customer, and your customer's returns to you, and we'll fulfill the promises you make. A promise is nothing until it's delivered. I thought it was very snappy, very clever, but to me it resonates of the gospel. A promise is nothing until it's delivered.
Well, here's the deliverance. Christ. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. All the anticipation, all the types, all the looking forward, all the shadows find their fulfillment and pour into the cross and are fulfilled in the person of Christ, where finally and ultimately we hear him saying it is finished. And he breathed his last, and he gave up his life. This promise then was, this death was promised. I can remind you also this morning of the conversation that I know many of you will know well. It's a conversation recorded for us in Luke chapter 24, the road to Emmaus, where the Lord comes alongside these two followers who are brokenhearted and discouraged, and they're walking away from Jerusalem, and Jesus comes alongside, and beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Such the scope and wonder and richness and vastness of the plan of God for our salvation being the death of a son that they couldn't take it in. And so Jesus is saying, listen, this was prophesied. This was promised. And all these things were concerning himself, and their hearts burned within them. Is your heart burned within you today as you think of the wonder of the cross? As we think of Jesus giving himself there for us? What a saviour. What a gospel. What a message. The death of Jesus then was promised. The death of Jesus, secondly, was real. Not to labour this, but just to make the point of taking note of these words, particularly in verse 4, where in this summary, which is based on the scriptural foundation, the promises, types, all now fulfilled in Jesus. Then he says, he was buried. He was buried. Why was he buried?
Because he was dead. Dead. There is a major bone of contention between Christianity and Islam on this very point, and we find many Muslim clerics and teachers deny the death of Jesus, and they'll say he revived, he swooned, but he recovered, and he recovered in the coolness of the tomb. And we have many, many themes and claims and counterclaims that go on to deny the truths of the gospel, which is why Paul is so clear here. He was buried. His death was real. His death was real. After six hours on the cross, Jesus' breath gave out, and he died. All vital functions of the body stopped, and yet even then, a Roman soldier still thrust a spear into his chest, Christ died on the cross. He died on that cross, as sure as you and I are sitting here today. His death was real. And so we remember his death till he comes. That's what makes the communion so special, so moving, so exhilarating, and yet so humbling at the same time. All these themes emerge in the hearts of believers at the table, and so they should. As you remember, the cost of our salvation was his death on the cross, a death that was brutal and horrid, a death that was prolonged, these hours of suffering and agony, as he slowly bled to death. And we remember that the cross had its specific purpose, and it was to inflict and ensure death. And that's where we find the Son of God becoming a curse for us, dying that we might live, experiencing isolation so that we today would know fellowship, taking the guilt of the sin of the world upon him, that we today could speak of the peace of God, that passes understanding that peace was secured for us in his death. And his death was real.
[21:19] For Christianity to be genuine, friends, the death of Jesus must also be genuine, because this was the price paid for sin. The wages of sin is death. Wages are earned. Wages are deserved. And as sinners, we deserve the wrath and judgment of God. And we cannot free ourselves from that condition. It's not that we walk into darkness. We're born in darkness. It's not that we become lawless. We are born as lawless individuals, the original sin, the sin that separates us from God.

It's the condition of our birth. It's how we live our life, unless and until we come in faith and repentance to Jesus. And pray that prayer, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.

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And so we find again and again the evangelistic preaching of the cross, asserting, maintaining, and defending that it is through this man is preached the forgiveness of sin. And that's a wonderful message today to take to Barbossa and across our island and nation, and to share with people that in Jesus there is forgiveness for sin. And they say, well, how can this be? Because he's paid a price we could not pay. That's why Wesley would write, amazing love. How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me? And he did. And so we come to the table in humility, in awe, and gratitude to give thanks to God. We sing with hope in our hearts, and we share the bread and the wine because of our amazing Savior. A promise is nothing until it's delivered. Well, Christ fulfilled the promise that he made to the Father to secure forgiveness for his people by going to the cross. And there he died. The doctrine of the death of Christ is the very substance of the gospel. There's the pulse of the New Testament message that we gather around today. His death was real. The Christ of the Bible was buried without life. The soldiers were satisfied he was dead. It was their business, and they were professionals. They were good at it. They knew what they were doing. They knew he was dead. When he was taken down from the cross, his broken-hearted followers knew he was dead. The woman watched from a distance and saw a corpse being placed in a tomb. They knew he was dead. Christianity asserts today he was dead. In these words, he was buried. His death was real. But moving very quickly on, the verse goes on, and here's the gospel.
He was raised. He was raised. What wonderful words to continue the sentence. You see, the world stops with, he was buried. And that's where they want Jesus. Dead, lifeless, a corpse in the grave. Thank you.
We'll have that. Let's go home. But the gospel continues. He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. So here again is the promise. The death was promised, as was the resurrection. We're going to sing in a moment from Psalm 16, which gives evidence and gives vent to the promise that he would not leave his Holy One to see corruption in the grave. Death had its way with death. Death was not victorious over Jesus. Death stings itself to death when it stings the Lord on the cross. He was buried, but he was raised. And that's why today we have a table. We give thanks not for a dead Savior, for a living Savior who was dead. That is the heart of our message today, a Savior who tasted death and separation and the judgment of God for us, who became a curse for us.
[25:15] A lifetime of study and reflection will not exhaust that one verse in Galatians. How can we begin to understand the depths of that? He became anathema for us, a curse. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

The cry of dereliction and isolation from the darkness of the cross as the sun failed. As the daylight was blackened out, as the Father dealt with the sun, as the Lamb of God took away the sin of the world in that darkness. So we find the death of Jesus, thirdly, was victorious.
That's where the verse goes on. The death was promised, the death was real, but the death was also victorious. When the woman came on the first Sunday morning with their oils and their ointments to pay the respects, to act as undertakers, to display and express their love and brokenheartedness for Jesus, they had nothing to do because there was no body. There was no corpse to anoint. They were worried about moving the stone. They didn't have to worry about that. The angel came down and removed the stone, not to let Jesus out, but to let the disciples look in, to see that there was no corpse, that the body that had occupied the tomb was no longer there, lifeless, but he had risen from the dead, and he is Lord.
What a wonderful saviour we worship today. And there's a wonderful repeated phrase in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which really brings out what Paul says here. Yes, he says he was buried, but now he says he was raised. And in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we have the same phrase repeated as the angels speak to the woman. In their awe and wonder and fear and uncertainty and trepidation, in their brokenheartedness, in their love for Jesus, they hear the words when they're at the tomb, he is not here. He is not here. He is not here. Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the same words.
These amazing, beautiful, life-giving words. That though Christ was dead, he now is alive. He was raised in accordance with the Scriptures on that third day, that first Easter morning, that death of Jesus that was promised and was real, was victorious. And in this act of resurrection, the Father declares perfect satisfaction has been rendered. The offering of the Son, perfect and sinless, has been accepted by the Father, and the empty tomb is the evidence. And so the world has constantly sought to disprove his resurrection, to reject his resurrection, to explain it away, because an empty tomb is evidence that the gospel is the verity that you and I need to reckon with today. That God's

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Son who was dead, now is alive. So today, friends, we worship and give thanks for a Savior who has risen, who has risen from the dead, and he is Lord. The women are transformed. They went there with oils and ointments. They had spent a fortune on seeking to embalm and show their respect to a dead teacher. They come hurrying back from that graveyard, having first been brokenhearted. We now read of them being breathless in their excitement to come and say, we have seen the Lord. The Lord has risen. And the message goes out, and the church is electrified. And they begin to stumble and struggle, and they're lost in wonder as they try to, what's happening here? And then finally, Jesus appears in their midst and says, peace be to you. And that's where Paul goes on. He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, and to all the apostles, last of all, as to one in time they born. He appeared also to me, for I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God,
[29:28] I am what I am. And that's how we take our place at the table today, because of the grace of God. We come to the table as his children, secure and held, forgiven, saved, made alive, having been dead, made near, having been far off, made a child of God, having been a child of wrath. We have been made near, because Christ died. He was buried. He was raised. And in his mercy and grace, we heard the call, come to me, and I will give you rest. And that's the business of Christ. That's the heart of Christ, the love and salvation we find in Christ, calling sinners to him. And he calls, and he calls.

And I know every Christian here will have a different story and a different testimony of how we heard the call, how we wrestled with the call, how we struggled with the call, and how finally we responded, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. And that's what Paul is putting us to here. By the grace of God, I am what I am. And what are you? You're a child of God, saved by grace and through faith, forgiven, made right and made new, because the death of Christ was promised, because the death of Christ was real, and because the death of Christ was victorious. Death is not an easy subject to talk to.
It can be such an emotional rollercoaster for many. It just pulls at the heartstrings, so we must be careful not to indulge and overdo that it's such a sensitive subject. But what we must remember is at the heart of the gospel, we find the Son of God dead and lifeless. That is amazing. But death did not have the final say on Jesus of Nazareth, neither did Pilate, neither did the Sanhedrin, neither did the Roman soldiers who formed the guard to keep them in the tomb. None of them could withstand the grace and power and majesty of God. As the angel of the Lord descended and rolled away that stone, and it was an earthquake, and the woman came and witnessed an empty tomb. And Mary met him in the garden.
Where have you taken my Lord, that I may take him away? And Jesus then begins to correct their misunderstanding, to open their eyes and their hearts to understand that he had died in according to the Scriptures, and he had been buried and raised in the third day in according to the Scriptures, and they were dealing with a risen living Savior who gave himself for us. One thing to say on death, just to close, is that the Bible makes it quite clear that time is running out on death.
And that's a good thing to remember today. Verse 26 says, the last enemy to be destroyed is death. And the day is coming when there will be no undertakers, no cemeteries, no graves, no death.
[32:39] And that's the amazing thing that we read of in the Gospel, that death has been renamed as sleep. Those who die in the Lord are described as being at sleep in the Lord. And that is, I perhaps, I guess, one of life's greatest comforts to us all, as we in this side of eternity face graves and undertakers and funerals and the awful work of death being done in our homes and families and districts.

But time is running out on death. And one day death will be no more. And we know that because the death of Jesus was victorious. Death stung itself to death when it stung Christ on the cross. He destroyed its power in his resurrection. And we give thanks that in the power of a risen Savior, the church has been ignited in its love. It has been gifted by the Holy Spirit. We know the gifts of the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit, the joy of the Spirit as we serve together our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to make him known to those around us and to tell them that, yes, he was dead, but now he is alive. And here is the testimony of these firsthand witnesses who say, then what we say today, by the grace of God, I am what I am because of his grace toward me. That was not in vain, because when he called, I heard and I responded. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have

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peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And may we know more and more of that peace as we approach the table together, and as we continue in worship together this morning. We'll bow in prayer for a moment.
Our gracious Lord, we thank and bless and praise you today that we have such a glorious gospel, the very gospel of God in our midst today, that speaks to us of a Savior who gave himself for us, that speaks to us of deliverance, that comes through the death of the deliverer.
Lord, our God, we can scarce take in the scope and splendor and vastness and depth of this glorious message. And we thank you that it is revealed to us fully in the face of Jesus Christ, your Son.
[35:11] So be with us as we continue together here to reflect upon him and study together the good news of Jesus. We bless you, Lord, for the truths of Scripture. And we ask that you be with us in every way here this day in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, we'll sing at this point in our service together from Psalm 16. Sing Psalms in Psalm 16. We'll sing from verse 8, these four verses, to the end of the psalm.
We'll sing from verse 8 to the end of the psalm to God's praise.
verse 9, these four verses, to the end of the psalm.
verse 9, these four verses, to the end of the psalm.
[37:10] All that in use of■■■ até a season. The Lord's mand picky from verse 10 onig and thus cards don't care for all individuals. What the Lord has the love of God's loafing? Put that in moment to submit practice.

For the Lord's■■■'s love to hum ■■ Padre sure you will not believe in Peace. Thou bienvenidos Mattisart, the psalm to the sisters, to the Lord and the Lord. Éx ■■■■ph optimize the significant is our presence of Christ the Lord and the to the■ of God.
But the Lord in this psalm is up before things like this. My soul and death to stay. Nor will you leave your holy one to see the dooms decay.
You have been known to be the path of life divine.
This shall I know at your right hand.
[38:37] Joy from your face will shine. Amen. Wonderful words.

And just to read a few verses from 1 Corinthians 15 as we pause and reflect on who the table is for and who should be at the table of the Lord. In verse 14, we've noticed already, if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and our faith is in vain.
We're even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise. If it is true, the dead are not raised. For the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. And then verse 20, but in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.
The death of Jesus was promised. The death of Jesus was real. The death of Jesus was victorious, and because of his death, we have a message of salvation to share and rejoice in today. The death of Jesus is saving. The heart of our message is that Christ died for sinners. And because we are justified through him by faith, we have peace with God. And that's the beauty and blessing and fellowship of the gospel that we enjoy. Peace with God. Because ultimately, as Peter said in his letter, Christ died to bring us to God. And what does God do with us when we come to him? He gives us his peace.
His peace. The peace of God that passes all understanding. That's why Paul would say in this, by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace toward me was not in vain. And that, Christian friend, is how each one of us stand today. We say, the grace of God toward us was not in vain, because we heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. And we responded in faith. And having responded in faith, having repented of our sin, and remember that is what we must do. No one can repent for us. God does not repent for us. We must do that. We must repent for our sins and ask the forgiveness of God, which he bestows in his grace and love and mercy. And he makes us his children in doing so.
[41:19] The death of Jesus is saving. We have a table now because he had a grave. We have hope because he went to the cross. There is fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, and peace, kindness, gentleness, goodness. We have all of these things because he experienced isolation, separation, and judgment, and death. It's little wonder as Paul reflects in all this. He comes to the end of the chapter and says simply, thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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And that's what he does. He gives us the victory, a victory over sin. The chain is broken. The grip and guilt of sin that holds us in a state of death and judgment is destroyed by the grace of God in Christ because he paid a price we could not pay. Who comes to the table? People who have acknowledged that reality, who have said, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner, who have acknowledged their need to be forgiven. And rather than delay and prevaricate and argue and refuse in stubbornness or pride to come to the foot of the cross and kneel and cry out for forgiveness, we have gone there and sought the forgiveness and cleansing that Christ offers all who in sincerity of heart come to him in repentance and look to him in faith. We read last night from Isaiah in chapter 61 that speaks there that beautiful way of the language of being clothed in a robe of righteousness. That, Christian friend, is how we now share in this supper together. And it is a supper. It is a meal. It is a banquet to nourish our hearts that we might go into the week ahead giving thanks for the victory that was won for us in Christ, who is our Lord and who is our Savior. I want to conclude these remarks now by just reading to you a beautiful summary that is a devotional focus on Jesus, because that's where we must look now. Not down, not in, but up. We look to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior and friend. I'm just going to read these words to you. It's the reflections of one of the early church fathers who puts it so beautifully.
When we have read these words, we're going to sing again from Psalm 118. And before we sing then, just allow these words to resonate in your heart, focusing on the Lord Jesus Christ. He began his ministry by being hungry, yet is the bread of life. He ended his ministry by being thirsty, yet is the living water.
He was weary, yet is our rest. He paid tribute, yet is the king. He was accused of being a demon, yet cast out demons. Jesus wept, yet he wipes away our tears. Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver, yet he redeemed the world. Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, yet he is the good shepherd.
Jesus died, yet by his death he destroyed the power of death. This is our Savior. Let us sing to his praise. We turn to the Psalter, Psalm 118. We're going to sing from verse 15. As we sing this Psalm, there's an emphasis to be made, first of all locally. If you are a member in the congregation and you have yet to take your place at the table, then please, during the singing of these verses, make your way to the table and take your place. And also, an emphasis that this is the table of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the table of the Free Church of Scotland. If you love the Lord Jesus, if you're looking to him as your Savior and trusting in him for the forgiveness of sins, your place is at his table, where he bids you come. For all things are now ready.
[45:29] We'll sing from Psalm 118, verse 15. In dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health. The Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly. The right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is in high.

The right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly. We'll sing to verse 21 to the praise of God. Amen.
The right hand doth ever valiantly The right hand of the mighty Lord Exalted is on high The right hand of the mighty Lord Doth ever valiantly I shall not die but live And shall the works of God discover
The Lord doth me just die set sore But not to death give no harm 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
The gate of God The gate of God The gate of God The gate of God The gate of God For thou me hast And hast my safety been Well these wonderful words That rousing tune that stirs the heart so much of us who have time and again had the privilege and joy of sharing this banquet together sets the scene for us to be refreshed in the Lord.
[49:26] It's been said by a king long ago that without supplies no army is brave And so we're here for sustenance We're here to be nourished We're here to grow in grace We're here to feed in faith We're here to receive in faith Ultimately the table is here to remind us He died to bring us to God And in doing so we know that peace that passes all understanding May we look to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and feed upon him in faith giving thanks for the bounty of his provision toward us Let us pray Almighty God we come to you today at this table the table of your Son a table that has been set for us a table that is groaning with provision and bounty and grace and blessing and nourishment and peace

And we thank you Lord God that this is how we partake today in faith And so we look to Jesus our Lord and Saviour the one who died yet through his death destroyed the power of death We thank

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you that we can speak today of a Saviour who loved us so much that he gave himself for us that he finished the work he was given to do He prayed If it is your will let this cup pass from me Nevertheless not my will but yours be done And there in covenant commitment and pure love he went to the cross We thank you that in going there he has provided for us here today And we will partake Lord in faith and ask in doing so your blessing on this bread and on this wine that they would be set aside and to us a spiritual feast and the means of grace that will be nourished and in a special way grow thereby as we partake here Lord today in faith we ask for your blessing in Jesus name

Amen The Lord Jesus spoke to the Apostle Paul and in his instructions in 1 Corinthians 11 tells us 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 a 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 bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place condemned he stood sealed my pardon with his blood hallelujah what a saviour and we worship him and give thanks for him at his table today for what he has done for us in giving himself for us there's refreshment here that's why we gather to be refreshed in our hearts and souls to receive grace ready for the day to come the week to come the month to come we feed in faith in our saviour we remember his death as he asks us to do we express and practice obedience and in doing so we receive blessing and refreshment but there's one other thing about this table there's room there's room here there's room here the unsearchable riches of Christ means that his grace is without measure and beyond boundary we can't restrict the grace of Christ and the grace in this supper is immeasurable because it flows from Jesus and he calls everyone today to come to him to live for him to live through him and to walk with him so friends in looking on today it's such a joy to have you here and if you haven't partaken this supper today

I would just ask you to remember this room here and Christ calls you to himself that you would profess your faith in him and go on to live for him with your brothers and sisters who have shared in this meal here today they have received refreshment as you put your trust in Jesus one day you too can look to take your place at this table to receive the refreshment that many here have received today there's room here and Jesus bids you come to him to find rest and forgiveness and in so doing may you in time participate in this supper to the glory of God we're going to conclude our service singing the beautiful words at the end of Psalm 72 his name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in him and blessed all nations shall him call Psalm 72 from verse 17 to the end to the praise of God this name this name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed blessed in him and blessed all nations shall him call now blessed be the Lord our God the God

God of Israel for he alone the wondrous works in glory that excel and blessed be his glorious name to all eternity the whole earth let his glory fill amen so let it be may the grace of the Lord [57:09] Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always amen to all being

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