

OM - Operation Mobilisation

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[0 : 00] Thank you for the warm welcome, and it's just lovely to be here with you tonight. And I noticed on the way up to Barvis, the mist cleared from the hills, and it became a lovely, clear evening.

You're right about Barvis. Can we just pray before we turn to God's Word? Father, thank you for the gift of your Word, which is living and active.

Thank you, Lord, that you have spoken through it through ages past, and you still speak through it today. And Lord, we pray tonight as we come to your Word, to open it, to look at it, that you would speak to all of us, Lord.

Challenge us, encourage us, meet with us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. I'm going to come to that passage in Kings in a moment, but I want to put it in context.

Last year, a year ago, I had the honour, privilege of taking the funeral for my cousin down in Devon. And she asked me to speak on Psalm 23, a psalm which we know well.

[1 : 19] I'm sure we do. I'm sure we do. And as I was preparing, I thought that Psalm 23 is about a life lived forward.

So often, if I was to say to you, well, so why are you here, or what are you doing? And you and I would say, well, it's because that happened, or because this happened.

Reacting to something that has gone before. But you and I are people of hope. You and I are people who look forward to a new heaven and a new earth.

You and I look forward to meeting the Lord in glory and worshipping Him. Surely we are forward-facing people. I was at a conference a while ago, and it was just part of an icebreaker.

The guy who was leading the conference said, I want you to change your life story and say, what I'm doing, what are you doing? Not because, but in order to.

[2 : 33] Because God is moving forward. God is working in this world in order to. In order to prepare the nations for glory.

In order to form the new heaven and the new earth. In order that Jesus may be glorified and worshipped as He should be.

That bit in Hebrews. For the joy set before Him. He endured the cross. Part of my call into ministry, when I was driving around Edinburgh City Bypass, every morning going to work in Musselburgh from Creep.

It was a long drive. But every morning the Lord would say to me very clearly, not an audible voice, but it could have been, forgetting what has passed. But pressing on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus has taken hold of you.

Considering everything but rubbish for the sake of knowing Him. And He called me to start living a life looking forward.

[3 : 41] So we can look at Psalm 23, and we can say, is that because the Lord is my shepherd, and because He's my shepherd, I can lie down in still waters?

Or is it the Lord is my shepherd in order? So that I can lie down in still waters. So that He can refresh my soul.

So that when I walk through the dark days, the valley of the shadow of death, in order that I will know His presence, and His comfort, and His rod, and His staff, in order that I can feed at His table in the presence of my enemies.

He's taught me, He has led me, He has equipped me to move forward. in order that I can say, surely goodness and mercy has followed, and will follow all the days of my life.

In order that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all my days. A life lived forward. And that was the story of my cousin, called by the Lord, healed by the Lord at a very, very early age.

[4 : 58] A life living forward. Looking always to glory. Always looking to meeting her Lord, and worshipping her Lord in heaven.

Always looking forward, straining forward, and surely, isn't that how we should live? Not as reacting to the past, but pressing towards the future.

I mean, hasn't the Lord dealt with your sins? Hasn't He forgiven you? Hasn't He wiped the past clear? Out of His grace? So that you can live forward?

So we turn to Elijah. And the Lord says to him, what are you doing here, Elijah? And Elijah says, well, I've been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty.

These rights have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I'm the only one left. And now they're trying to kill me too. So the Lord said, go and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord.

[6 : 06] So the wind came, and the earthquake, and the fire, and then the gentle whisper. Then the Lord said to him again, what are you doing here, Elijah?

Now the Lord, when He asks you a question, it's never for His information. He knows already. It's for you to go and think about, and to pray about, and consider.

What are you doing here, Elijah? Elijah wasn't in disobedience. Far from it. The Lord's provision had actually brought him here.

He had that incredible encounter with the prophets of Baal. Can you imagine what that would have been like? We read it, and we think, yes, great, and great.

Can you imagine what it would have been like for Elijah standing on top of that mountain with 450 prophets of Baal doing their stuff.

[7 : 13] And he's just trusting on his own, pouring water on his altar, trusting that the Lord would come through. And of course the Lord did.

But that is exhausting stuff. And so he ran. But the Lord fed him. The Lord enabled him to run. The Lord was with him. I think, to be honest, that Elijah had trauma.

I think he had type 2 trauma. I think he was running. He was exhausted. But the Lord said, Elijah, what are you doing here today?

And I wonder if the Lord would say that question to us. What are you doing here, Elijah? What are you doing here?

Why are you here? Why has the Lord still spared you? Why are you here? Why are you worshipping the Lord tonight? Yes, there'll be a context, and yes, there'll be a because. But if it's only looking backwards, I think the Lord would say, look forwards.

[8 : 22] Why are you here? Oh, because. No, no, don't. Not because. In order that. So that.

I may be encouraged in the Lord. So that I can go back to my workplace. So that I can give testimony to the Lord in my life. So that the Lord may touch my family.

So that the Lord may touch my community. So that I can be part of the global mission movement. Barvis is the center of the universe.

We know that. But there's also the universe out there. There's the nations. Which don't know the Lord yet. So the Lord's saying, what are you doing here?

What are you doing here? And you notice the Lord says here. It's not there. Hey, Elijah, where are you? What are you doing over there?

[9 : 23] The Lord's saying, what are you doing here, Elijah? Right where you are. And the Lord was right with Elijah where Elijah was.

So whatever your circumstance today. Whatever you've been through. Whatever you've suffered. Whatever your successes.

The Lord is here. With you. Right now. He's here. To lead you forward. Jesus says, I am the way, the truth and the life.

It's not something which you can come and take and go away. Jesus says, I am the way, the truth and the life. We were in Stornoway the other day and asking, could you tell us, there's a lady walking past with a wee one, where's a good coffee shop?

And she says, well, if you go down there and wrap it to the Blue Lagoon, it's on the harbour front. And she says, oh, I'm going to the library. I'll take you. Thank you. So much easier.

[10 : 30] Some of my cousins live in Devon. And I was wanting to go and see one of my cousins who lived in a village called Coldridge.

And we were driving the back country, Devon Lanes, you know, the narrow ones with the high hedges and really narrow. And we stopped and asked this lady in a village called Coldridge, a Mortschart Bishop, can you tell us the way to Coldridge, please?

And she says, oh, my dear. Well, if I was going there, I wouldn't start here. Well, we are here. Oh, in that case, the Lord is here.

And he will lead you personally. He leads you. He guides you. He takes you by your hand so that you can live a life lived forward.

If you think the Lord's Prayer, I've got it written here in front of me. The Lord's Prayer is a progression, leading forwards.

[11 : 37] It says, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not in temptation, leading, going forward, but deliver us from evil, for yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

Now, we have an opportunity, we have a choice to make when the Lord says, what are you going to do? What are you doing here, Elijah?

We have a choice. We can arm her up, so to speak. We can get all defensive and say, it's their fault, or whatever. And we can blame everybody else.

We can dump everything. And Jesus says, part of our journey is to forgive. Forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And then, the prayer which the Lord taught us goes on to say, and lead us not in temptation. The temptation is to get defensive.

[12 : 39] The temptation is to hit out. The temptation is to say no. And Jesus says, of course, there are other meanings in there as well, but allow the Lord to work in your life.

The temptation is to, as we say, armor up, to get defensive, to hit out. But the Lord says, be forgiving, be gentle with yourself as with others.

Let the work of God work deeply in your heart so that you can move forward. Because nothing stops you in your tracks faster than unforgiveness.

Not letting the Lord forgive you because you're not coming in repentance to Him. That stops you in your tracks. But also, actually not forgiving yourself.

The Lord has forgiven you. Why aren't you forgiving yourself? In Colossians, it says, He has reconciled all things through Him, to Himself, through His blood shed on the cross.

[13 : 49] That means He's reconciled who you are to Himself. And if God has reconciled you to Himself, then in the power of His blood and in His name, surely we can reconcile ourselves to ourselves.

Lord, this is who I am. Forgive me, but work in me and take me forward. Forgive as you have been forgiven. Don't stop the Lord's work in your heart.

So God said, What are you doing here, Elijah? What are you doing here, Elijah? Elijah needed to meet with God again.

Do you remember at the beginning of Elijah's call way back in chapter 17, Elijah the Tishbite from Tishbe and Gilead and Gilead said to Ahab, he had to run and the Lord said, Go to Kareth Ravine and I will feed you there.

The ravens will bring you food. Is the Lord calling Elijah back to that living encounter with him? Do you remember when you first came to the Lord?

[15 : 03] Do you remember how your heart burned? I do. I remember it clear as though it was yesterday. My heart burned within me. And I think the Lord was saying to Elijah, Elijah, come back.

Remember your first love. Remember what it was like when you first came to me. Remember what it was like to have that beautiful sense of sins forgiven, that knowledge of sins forgiven.

Remember that, Elijah. Let's go back there again. Let's remember those days. What are you doing here, Elijah?

What are you doing here, Elijah? In Leviticus 6, there's a very interesting little verse which a lot of people just gloss over, but I think it's so important.

Anybody here got a coal fire? Anybody here got a wood-burning stove? Surely, come on. Anybody here got a wood-burning stove? I'm sure you do.

[16 : 12] We all, most of us do now anyway. Leviticus 6, 8. The Lord said to Moses, give Aaron and his sons this command. These are the regulations for the burnt offering.

The burnt offering is to remain on the altar half throughout the night till morning. And the fire must be kept burning on the altar. We understand that. The priest shall then put on his linen clothes with

linen undergarments next to his body and shall remove the ashes of the burnt offering that the fire has consumed on the altar and place them beside the altar.

Then he is to take off these clothes and put on others and carry the ashes outside the camp to a place that is ceremonially clean. The fire on the altar must be kept burning.

It must not go out. When we have sacrificed to the Lord, lived a life to the Lord, when we have seen successes or failures, things which embarrass us or shame us or things that encourage us, they can be like sacrifices.

But yesterday's coal or wood turns to today's ashes. And you know as well as I do that the ashes need to be removed so that the fire can burn brightly.

[17:43] The fire must not go out. And the Lord is saying to Elijah, Elijah, those ashes from that victory which happened 40 days ago on Mount Carmel, that was an amazing sacrifice.

That is so precious. But it's yesterday. It's yesterday's victory. But the Lord in Leviticus 6 says, these ashes are precious.

So the priest is to dress appropriately. The priest is to take these ashes with care and reverence, recognizing these were yesterday's sacrifices. These are precious.

but they still need to be removed and handled properly. What is yours yesterday's sacrifices where you've worked hard for the Lord, you've seen wonderful things for the Lord, you've gone the extra mile for Him.

Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful. But are they stopping you burning brightly today? Do you need to release them to the Lord?

[19:07] There's a wonderful bit in Genesis 15, 1 to 17. I don't know if you know it, you probably do, you're good Bible reading folks, where, and we've referred to it already this evening, about the covenant that God made with Abraham.

Do you remember that God said to Abraham, I'm going to make your children, your inheritance as the stars of the sky innumerable? And Abraham says, how's this going to happen?

And God said, well, I'll do it. Now, I'm going to make a covenant with you. Now, I want you to take some animals, split them in two carcasses, put one on either side, and I'm going to make a covenant with you to give you my promise that this will happen.

Now, we read elsewhere in Jeremiah, we read about a covenant being made, a covenant being cut. You cut a covenant. It's a bit like a contract, but it's much more so. And a cut of a covenant is cutting these carcasses, these things in two.

So the two people who are making this covenant walk between the cut carcasses, and they both agree that if either of them breaks the covenant, then what is happening to these carcasses will happen to them.

[20:33] Jeremiah, I think, it's 36, around about there. So God says, Abraham, I'm going to make a covenant with you. Take these two carcasses and put them side by side.

And do you remember what happens next? Abraham falls into a deep sleep and there is what we would call a theophany, a presence of God. A smoking brazier, a smoking pot passes between these carcasses.

And God is saying to Abraham, Abraham, I'm making a covenant with you. I'm cutting a covenant with you. And by that smoking pot, by the presence of God on his own, going between the carcasses, God says the most incredible thing, Abraham, I'm making a contract, I'm making a covenant with you.

And if either of us break this covenant, I'll take the blame. I'll take the penalty. God says, Abraham, I'm making a covenant with you.

And if you break the covenant, Abraham, I'll take the blame. I'll carry the consequences. Which is, of course, exactly what the Lord did on the cross.

[22:02] Exactly. Way back in Genesis 15, God says, this is the kind of God I am. I'll take the blame.

I'll take the consequences. Just come to me, repent. Come to me and pray. So this is the God who's saying to us tonight, what are you doing here?

Oh, I don't know if I can release this to you, Lord, or I don't know if I can let this go, or I don't know, this is the God we're coming to, who cuts a covenant with you and says, I will take the blame.

I will carry the consequences which he has done on the cross, so you can be set free to get up and follow the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, so you can follow him onwards into the future, so you

can live a life, not because, but in order to.

What are you doing here? Why are you here? Why has the Lord called you here tonight? Why has the Lord called you to Barvis? Why has the Lord brought you to Lewis?

[23 : 19] Why are you here? And don't say because, that's the context, that the Lord says, I want you to live a life forward.

What are you doing here? why are you here? What do you need to release to the Lord tonight? Do you need to release the Lord's sin? Rebellion, where you have just actually said blatantly to the Lord, no, I'm not doing that.

Could be. That's between you and the Lord. or do you need to release the Lord past successes, nostalgia, I remember the good old days, oh, they were great.

I can remember the good old days when the Lord did some amazing things. That's yesterday. I'm living forwards. Or how about past failures?

[24 : 23] You think, oh, I can't do that again, that was too painful, that cost me too much. What do you need to give up? What do you need to let go? Shame, hurts, offences.

I'm not speaking to them again, they need to make the first move. You stop dead in your tracks. Nostalgia, your safety net. I don't know.

That's between you and the Lord. But I just want to ask you the question which the Lord asked Elijah. what are you doing here?

Amen. Let's close by singing Psalm 67, the first version.

A psalm where, it's a missional psalm, looking for the nations to come. that they may know his saving grace.

[25 : 33] And we're all called to be part of his mission. We're going to chat about this in a minute over a cup of coffee next door. And I'll tell you more about mission. I'll tell you some very exciting, very exciting stories, very exciting stories about what God is doing in the world and how you can be part of it.

how we can all share in God's mission, vision for the nations because I tell you, the Lord is going somewhere. The Lord is doing something in this world which will take your breath away.

That's a challenge for you to stay, isn't it? That the earth, thy way, and nations all may know thy saving grace.

Psalm 67. Lord, bless and pity us, shine on us with thy face, that near thy way, our nations all may know thy saving grace.

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

[27 : 08] Oh, let the nations be glad, thy in songs thy voices raise.

Thou justly people judge, honor through nations all.

Let people praise thee, praise thee, Lord, let them praise thee, both great and small.

The earth, her fruit, shall yield, our God shall blessings send.

God shall us bless, men shall live here unto our soft most end.

[28 : 26] And may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep equip you with everything good for doing his will.

And may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.