

God On Trial

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this morning, with the Lord's help, the Lord's enabling, we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read.
- Gospel according to Mark, chapter 14. Mark, chapter 14. And if we read again at verse 53. Mark 14, verse 53.
- It will be three years tomorrow since Nelson Mandela died. He died on the 5th of December 2013.
- But it was in April 1964 that Nelson Mandela was on trial in South Africa. And as many of you know from history or from watching the film that was made recently, Nelson Mandela was accused of sabotage and treason by the white-ruled apartheid state.
- There's no disputing that Nelson Mandela was an anti-apartheid revolutionary. He led an organisation who sought to overturn a racist and oppressive government.
- [1 : 3 9] But a lot of the evidence which was put forward at Mandela's trial, it was completely false. There were false witnesses, false accusations, false testimonies given against him.
- And in the end, Mandela was falsely prosecuted and sentenced to life imprisonment with labour, with hard labour. And during his prison sentence, the white apartheid state authorities, they hoped that Mandela could just be quietly forgotten about.
- But at that time, the world was changing. And racism and the oppression of black communities was slowly being eroded. To the point that international pressure and growing fear of a racial civil war, it meant that the apartheid government, they had to change their position.
- And on the 11th of February 1990, Nelson Mandela was dramatically released. And such was the international interest that it was broadcast live around the world.
- It was a public vindication.
- [3 : 1 3] He had gone from victim to victor. He had gone from victim to victor. And you know, that's what I was thinking about when we come to this. We're nearing the end of Mark's Gospel.
- And we're seeing that God's promise of salvation is now reaching its climax. In which there is the promise of a victory. Victory over the power of sin and death.
- And there is the promise of vindication. Vindication for God's suffering servant. That he will be raised on the third day from the dead. But in order for there to be a victory and for there to be a vindication, there has to be a victim.
- There has to be a victim. And Jesus, as we know, was that victim. Because like Nelson Mandela, this trial before us today, the trial of Jesus, the evidence which was put forward was completely false.
- There was false witnesses, false accusations. There was false testimonies given against Jesus. And in the end, Jesus was falsely prosecuted and sentenced to death.
- [4 : 2 0] But it was through his death and resurrection that Jesus would go from victim to victor. From victim to victor. But before we come to see Jesus as the victor in chapter 16 when he's raised from the dead on the third day.

We see in this passage the beginning of Jesus as the victim. And we see in this passage Jesus, the victim, we see that he encountered three things.

Because he encountered, first of all, a false prosecution. And then a foolish priest. And then a faltering Peter. Jesus, the victim, encountered a false prosecution, a foolish priest, and a faltering Peter.

So there are the headings I'd like us to use this morning. We look first of all at a false prosecution. A false prosecution. If you look at verse 55.

Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death. But they found none. For many bore false witness against him. But their testimony did not agree.

[5 : 32] And some stood up and bore witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands. And in three days I will build another not made with hands. Yet even about this their testimony did not agree.

And with these words, Mark is reminding us that Jesus was fulfilling his prophecies. Because on many occasions Jesus had told his disciples that when they go up to Jerusalem, The Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes.

And they will condemn him to death. And he will be delivered over to the Gentiles, which are the Romans. And they will mock him, spit on him, and scourge him, and kill him.

And three days later he will rise again. And we see here Jesus' prophecy, it's now reaching its fulfillment as he stands before the Sanhedrin, Which was the Jewish ruling council consisting of all the religious leaders in Israel, The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.

But now that Jesus has been handed over to the Sanhedrin by Judas, The Sanhedrin still has to find evidence to prosecute Jesus. They need a corresponding testimony of witnesses to prove that Jesus was a blasphemer, And that he is worthy of death.

[6 : 53] And they needed to find witnesses because that's what their law demanded. Jewish law demanded that in order for anyone to be condemned, They had to have two or more corroborating witnesses.

It says in Deuteronomy chapter 17, That if there is found among you within any of your towns a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the Lord, Then you shall inquire diligently, And if it is true and certain that such an abomination has been done in Israel, You shall bring it out to your gates that a man or a woman who has done this evil thing, And you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones, On the evidence of two or three witnesses, The one who is to die shall be put to death, A person shall not be put to death, On the evidence of one witness.

And you know it's hard to believe that the religious leaders would go as far as to accuse Jesus Of doing evil in the sight of the Lord. But what's interesting is that their law didn't allow for crucifixion.

Because if anything, they were only allowed to stone Jesus to death. They had to condemn him under Roman law to have him crucified. But as we know, stoning Jesus to death, well that wasn't enough for them.

They wanted more. They wanted Jesus to experience the most painful death possible. They wanted Jesus crucified. But in order for that to happen, they needed evidence.

[8 : 22] They needed evidence to accuse him. They needed testimonies. They needed witness statements to prove that Jesus had done evil in the sight of the Lord And that he should be put to death.

But they couldn't find him. And Mark emphasizes the unsuccessful efforts of the religious leaders By repeating the same words and phrases again and again.

If you look at verse 55 again, it says, Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death. But they found none. For many bore false witness against him.

But their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands. And in three days I will build another not made with hands.

Yet about this, their testimony did not agree. Their testimony did not agree. There was no consistency. There was no transparency.

[9 : 21] There was no authenticity. There was no validity to all the statements and testimonies which were being given. And in the end they were seeking to bring this false prosecution against Jesus.

Because what do you do? What do you do if you're desperate to get your own way and fulfill your own agenda, even if it's against the truth? What do you do?

You lie. You lie. And that's been the history of mankind throughout every century. If you want to get your own way and fulfill your own agenda, even if it's against the truth, you lie.

Adam did it in the Garden of Eden. He took of the fruit. He blamed his wife. Eve gave it to me. Adam's son Cain did it. He killed his own brother. He killed his brother Abel.

Then denied it. Denied that he knew anything about it. Am I my brother's keeper? Abraham did it. He said that his wife was actually his sister. David did it.

[10 : 27] He lusted after Bathsheba, which turned to adultery, progressed to lies and deceit, and it all ended in murder. My friend, if we're desperate to get our own way and fulfill our own agenda, even if it's against the truth, then we will lie.

We will lie. We will deceive ourselves. And we will deceive others to get our own way. But that's never a good position to be in because lies never come alone.

There's always some, they're always a stepping stone to something bigger and something more serious. But what's amazing is that the only charge which the Sanhedrin brought against Jesus was a charge that was later repeated at the crucifixion.

It says in verse 58, we heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and in three days I will build another not made with hands.

And in the following chapter, we're told that those who passed by, they derided him, wagging their heads saying, ah, you, you who said you would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself and come down if you are the Christ.

[11 : 42] But the statement of Jesus, it wasn't a lie. It was the absolute truth. Because in making such a statement, Jesus was of course referring to himself and not the physical temple.

But more than that, Jesus was declaring that he is the temple of the living God. And his resurrected body will replace the earthly temple in Jerusalem.

And you know my friend, against all the backdrop of the lies and the deceit that was going on at the trial of Jesus, Jesus was affirming and promising that if we want to meet with God and enjoy all the benefits and blessings of eternal life, then it's not religion we need.

It's not a building that we need to come to. It's not a form of worship that we need to adopt. It's not a type of clothing that we need to wear. It's not rules that we need to follow.

It's not a liturgy that we have to read. My friend, what we need, what we need to do is come to Jesus Christ. And we need to enter into a living relationship with him because he's a risen saviour.

[13 : 01] He's alive. He ever lives. And when you come to him, when you come to him in your need and your dependence upon him, you need to worship him and love him and follow him and confess that you need him, that you need to have him in your life every single day and know him as the temple of the living God.

My friend, you don't need to come to anything or anyone else but to Jesus. but to Jesus. So the question is, will you not come to him today and see that he's a wonderful saviour who promises to us all the benefits and blessings of eternal life.

Eternal life. And so we've seen that Jesus was the victim in a false prosecution. But secondly, we see that he encountered a foolish priest.

A foolish priest. Look at verse 60. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?

But he remained silent and made no answer. And it's in John's gospel, John identifies the high priest as Caiaphas.

[14 : 27] And during this trial in which Caiaphas is present and presiding over things, he has noticed that Jesus isn't saying anything in response to all his false accusations and the false accusers.

especially since these false witnesses they're making all these false testimonies against him. But the silence of Jesus it only affirms his innocence.

But Caiaphas he wanted a confession from Jesus. He wanted Jesus to either speak against the religious authorities or confirm that he was indeed the Christ.

And you know this confrontation between Caiaphas and Jesus. It's an amazing moment. It's an amazing moment in the gospel. Because here is Caiaphas the high priest.

He is acting as the representative of God on earth. He is the mediator between God and his people. And he is the one who seeks to bring reconciliation between God and his people by the blood of a spotless lamb.

[15 : 37] And yet on the other side on the other hand there is Jesus. But he's not only the representative of God on earth. He is God. He's the God-man.

God manifest in the flesh. He is God on earth. And he's as God-man he is the true mediator between God and mankind.

kind. Because he can relate to both. And his mission Jesus' mission is to bring reconciliation and reunion between holy God and sinful man.

And he's going to do it by his own blood. And so this meeting in this meeting we have Caiaphas the high priest and Jesus Christ the great high priest.

We have the one who would make atonement by the blood of another and the one who would make atonement by his own blood. We have old covenant and new covenant.

[16 : 30] We have shadow and the fulfillment. We have the promise and the person. And it's an amazing moment. And yet Caiaphas fails to see how amazing it is.

He fails to see that his position as high priest has always pointed and foreshadowed the person of Jesus Christ. Caiaphas fails to see that he's part of this wonderful moment in history when the old is going to pass away and all is going to become new.

And he fails to see how wonderful this meeting is because he's blinded by his own self-righteousness. Blinded by his own self-righteousness.

And my friend my biggest concern is that there are many who sit in church just like him. You're confronted with the wonder and the glory of who Jesus is but you cannot see it for yourself because you're blinded by your own self-righteousness.

I'm a good person. God will look at me in favour on the last day. If everything weighs out I'll be fine. But you're blinded. You can't see your need of Jesus because you don't see the problem.

[17 : 48] You can't see your ruin and as a result you don't seek the remedy. And what's so sad is that you can't see that every Lord's day it's an amazing moment for you.

An absolutely amazing moment when you come face to face with the great high priest and saviour of sinners Jesus Christ. And yet like Caiaphas you foolishly pass him by without a second thought.

you pass him by. It's an amazing moment for Caiaphas but all that this foolish priest was concerned about was getting rid of Jesus.

Getting Jesus out of his sight. Doesn't want to hear from him anymore. And what we're told here is Jesus said nothing.

Jesus said nothing. And it just angered the high priest because he wanted a confession from Jesus. And yet Jesus maintains his silence in face of all the charges against him.

[18 : 56] Because any statement that Jesus would have said it would have been exploited by those who were prosecuting him. But he remains silent. And with this Mark is consciously relating Jesus to the description of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53.

whose silence confirms his innocence. Where Isaiah says in Isaiah 53 he was oppressed and afflicted yet he opened not his mouth.

He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter. A sheep before a shearer is dumb. So he openeth not his mouth. That's Jesus.

Didn't open his mouth. And you know it was Peter well after this event that we're going to look at. Peter when he wrote his first letter to the churches he said that that silence of Jesus during his trial was a great example to the Christian.

Because when Peter wrote his letter to Christians he wrote to those who were being persecuted for their faith. And Peter knew that we live in a world that is hostile to the gospel.

[20 : 12] And that those who are hostile to the gospel will accuse the Christian and the Christian church of many things. They'll say that they're backward and they're outdated and they're oppressive and they're deluded and they're brainwashed.

And they're trying to brainwash other people. And we even see it increasing more and more in our day and generation. And just to give you an example. I'm sure you all know or you've at least heard or even seen the BBC Breakfast presenter and BBC Sport presenter Dan Walker.

And I'm sure you're all aware that he's a professing Christian. Where his father was a minister, he was a Christian, he's a Christian since the age of 12, and he refuses to do any television work on the Lord's Day because of his faith.

And as a result, Dan Walker is constantly in the papers because of his faith and his Sabbatarian views. To the point that recently, I read it the other day, that a reporter in The Guardian accused him of being untrustworthy just because he's a Christian.

He's untrustworthy because he's a Christian. But what you never see is Dan Walker striking back or retaliating or saying anything in the media fear, which is only a testament to his faith.

[21 : 35] And that's what Peter wrote about in his letter. He said that when we experience injustice or persecutions or oppositions as Christians, he says, this is what you have been called to because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you might follow in his footsteps.

And Peter says, he committed no sin. Neither was the deceit found in his mouth. He was reviled, but he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

And Peter affirms to us that we need to be like Jesus in our witness, in our homes, in our workplaces, in our communities. And when we experience injustice or persecution or opposition, as Christians we have to entrust ourselves to the God who is working all things together for good.

And we have to be like Jesus. Jesus who opened not his mouth. Jesus opened not his mouth.

But there was one point in this trial when Jesus broke the silence. we're told in verse 61, the second half, again the high priest asked him, are you the Christ, the son of the blessed?

[23 : 05] And Jesus said, I am. And you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven. And by the way in which Caiaphas asked the question, Jesus couldn't remain silent because he couldn't lie.

He couldn't deny who he was. And with this, Jesus confirms to Caiaphas his identity. But there's something so remarkable about the response of Jesus. Because he says, I am.

I am. That's the title that God used to reveal himself to Moses in the burning bush. When God said to Moses, I am who I am.

I am the eternal God who is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning and without end. But then Jesus said he was the son of man, which is a title that referred to a prophecy in Daniel chapter seven about the Messiah.

And as the high priest Caiaphas, he would have been very, very familiar with this prophecy in Daniel seven in which Daniel foretold that there would be one who would come like the son of man.

[24 : 19] he will be a human in human flesh. And as Daniel prophesies, he says, to him will be given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages shall serve him.

And his dominion will be from everlasting to everlasting and it shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. But more than that, in Jesus' answer, he not only confirms to Caiaphas that he's God, God and man, the son of man, but that he's also the great high priest.

He's one who sat at the right hand of the almighty. And the one who sits at the right hand of the almighty is the Lord. And that's what we were singing about in Psalm 110.

It's a psalm which, as we said, speaks so clearly about Jesus. The Lord did say unto my Lord, sit, thou at my right hand until I make thy foes a stool whereon thy feet may stand.

That's this Lord. He says, the Lord is a priest forever. And as the psalmist goes on in verse five, he says, the glorious and mighty Lord that sits at thy right hand shall in his day of wrath strike through kings that do him withstand.

[25 : 43] And with that, Caiaphas knew that Jesus was speaking against him. He knew that Jesus was directing everything towards the high priest.

And the response of Caiaphas is that he tears his clothes in anger and rage against Jesus for all his blasphemous claims. Claims that he is God, that he is God in human flesh, and that he is the great high priest.

And in the minds of the Sanhedrin, the only outcome for such blasphemy is to put him to death. The high priest, it says in verse 63, tore his garments and said, what further witness do we need?

You've heard his blasphemy, what is your decision? And they all condemned him as one deserving death. And some began to spit on him and cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, prophesy.

And the guards received him with blows. An amazing moment. Jesus just telling them who he is. But one commentary makes the brilliant point that the trial of Jesus, it's profoundly ironic.

[26 : 50] Because he says the Sanhedrin stands on the law, and Jesus sits in the dock. But in reality, the Sanhedrin breaks the law, and Jesus upholds the law.

The Sanhedrin longed for a testimony against Jesus, and yet the testimony they needed wasn't provided by all their false witnesses that they had pulled in. The testimony was provided by Jesus himself.

The Sanhedrin makes a mockery of Jesus, and his ability to prophesy, but every one of his prophecies are coming through. Above all, the commentator says, it's Caiaphas who blasphemes, because he fails to recognize that Jesus is the Son of God.

Caiaphas, and the irony of the trial of Jesus was that the religious establishment, and the high priest of God, Caiaphas, they condemned God to death.

They condemned God to death. And that's how far sin will go, in order to get its own way. It will silence God himself.

[28 : 00] sin will silence God. Sin will silence God himself. And so we've seen that Jesus, the victim, he encountered a false prosecution, a foolish priest, but lastly, and saddest of all, Jesus encountered a faltering Peter.

A faltering Peter. If you look at verse 66, and as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, you also were with the Nazarene Jesus.

But he denied it, saying, I neither know nor understand what you mean. And he went out into the gateway, and the cock crowed. We were told back in verse 54 that Peter followed Jesus at a distance, and he warmed himself by the fire with the guards, the guards of the, well, the servants of the Sanhedrin.

Peter followed Jesus at a distance, and as a result, he mingled with the henchmen who arrested Jesus, and who would soon mock and beat him.

Peter followed Jesus at a distance, and it caused him to mingle with the world. God. And my friend, never think that it's a good place to be as a disciple, when you're following Jesus at a distance.

[29 : 40] Never think that it's a good place to be, having confessed his name, and yet denying that you know Jesus at all. Never think that it's a good place to be when you're warming yourself by the campfire of the world.

Never think that you are freest from danger when you are furthest from Christ, because it's only the beginning of a slippery slope. And Peter's actions, they're recorded for us in Scripture, not only to remind us that we all fail, and that no Christian is perfect, but Peter is also here on the pages of Scripture, so that none of us will become complacent, and think that it's okay to follow Jesus from a distance, because it's not okay.

we need to actively seek to follow Jesus closely, and live up to the confession that we have made about him. We need to actively seek in order to be in that good place where we are close to Jesus, and under his word, and gathering with his people.

We need to actively and intentionally get involved in our congregation, and get involved in the goings-on in our congregation. And you know, I can't understand any Christian who confesses the name of Christ, and they don't consciously make the effort to be in church both ends on the Lord's day.

Of course, I know that people have children, and some of you don't keep well, and you're only thankful to be here at all. But for those of us who have no excuse, none whatsoever, I can't understand a Christian who says that they love the Lord, and they'll sit at home, instead of coming to church to worship the very Christ who loves them.

[31 : 26] I can't understand any Christian who professes the name of Christ, and they will not come to the prayer meeting. I can't understand any Christian who is content with where they are at, and doesn't want to be closer to Jesus, and grow more in their faith.

My Christian friend, to call yourself a Christian is to confess to the world that you are a follower of Christ. Christ, and following Christ, it requires commitment, it requires faithfulness to his word, to his church, to his cause, to his people.

And sometimes I think that those who don't even call themselves Christians, they're more committed than the Christian. My friend, Peter is a warning that complacency with Christ only comes from being too close to the campfire of the world.

And it's never a good place to be when we are following Jesus at a distance and mingling with the world. But you know what's remarkable about this passage is that it shows us that even those in the world know when the Christian is not living as they should.

Because we see that those who were warming themselves by the fire, they recognized that Peter had been with Jesus. as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, you also were with the Nazarene Jesus.

[32 : 59] But he denied it. And with that, the world knows that the Christian is someone who has been with Jesus. It doesn't matter how many times they deny it, they know.

They know. Because even the way the Christian speaks indicates that they are different from the world. And that's what we see even with Peter, if you allow me to stretch the analogy.

Verse 69, And the servant girl saw him and began to say to the bystanders, This man is one of them. But again he denied it. And after a while the bystanders again said to Peter, Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.

He spoke like them. He spoke like someone who followed Jesus. And you know, it doesn't matter how hard the Christian may try to be like the world and be friendly with the world.

The reality is the world doesn't want the Christian there. Not only because the world knows that the Christian doesn't belong there, but also because the world doesn't feel comfortable with them being there.

[34 : 08] You know, if I were to go to one of the dances in the Barvis Hall on a Friday or a Saturday night, people would feel uncomfortable. They would be shocked, but they would also feel uncomfortable because they wouldn't want a Christian there, let alone a minister.

The world knows that it's not the place of the Christian to warm themselves by the campfire of the world. The Christian doesn't belong there.

They don't fit in there. And by being there, they're denying their confession as a Christian. They're denying that they are different, that they're separate, that they have been, they're distinct from the world.

They're denying that they have made a commitment to following Jesus Christ. They're denying that they are a disciple. And that's what Peter was doing. Peter was denying that he was a disciple.

But he was not only denying that he was a disciple of Jesus by just being there, he was openly denying that he knew Jesus at all. I do not know this man of whom you speak.

[35 : 18] And in that moment we're told in verse 72, immediately the cock crowed a second time and Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.

And he broke down and wept. The authorised version says that Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had spoken.

Indicating that it wasn't the cock crowing that made Peter weep. It was remembering what Jesus had said. It was the word of Jesus penetrating his heart that caused Peter to experience conviction of sin.

It was the word of Jesus pricking his conscience which caused Peter to weep bitterly. it was the word of Jesus piercing to his very soul. That's what brought about genuine repentance.

But it was also at that moment that Jesus encountered a faltering Peter. Luke tells us in his gospel that when the cock crowed from the second time Jesus was being taken out of the palace of the high priest and he was being marched to Pilate.

[36 : 32] And in that moment we're told in Luke's gospel Jesus looked at him. Jesus looked at Peter. And in that one look Peter knew he had failed to listen to Jesus.

He knew he had failed to heed the warning of Jesus and he had failed to stand up for Jesus and be known as one of his disciples. But as we said Peter's actions are recorded for us in scripture so that none of us will become complacent.

and think that it's okay to follow at a distance. But they're also there to remind us that we all fall. And no Christian is perfect. Because my friend Peter may have fallen dramatically but he was restored beautifully.

Because after denying Jesus three times Jesus speaks with Peter. It's recorded in John chapter 21. And as Jesus is talking to Peter he asks Peter three times do you love me?

Peter do you love me? Do you love me? And each time Peter responds and he renews his confession and he reaffirms his love for Jesus saying yes Lord you know that I love you.

[37 : 58] Yes Lord you know that I love you. And it's a beautiful picture of the Lord's forgiveness and his restoration. My friend Peter ought to remind all of us that Christians are not perfect.

Christians are not perfect. We say things we shouldn't say. We do things we shouldn't do. We make mistakes. We falter. That doesn't excuse us. but it should be a great indicator to us that Christianity and being a Christian it's not about being perfect.

It's not about looking to other Christians. It's not about pointing out their faults. It's all about looking to a perfect saviour and following him. It's all about seeing our imperfections and our weaknesses and our flaws and our failings and all our sins and taking them to this perfect saviour who willingly and freely forgives us.

Forgives us for free. And maybe what holds you back from committing your life to Jesus Christ and following him publicly maybe what concerns you is that well you worry that you'll be like Peter and let Jesus down.

well all I can say to you is that that's a good thing to worry about. It's a very good thing to worry about because it means that you hold Jesus in high esteem.

[39 : 31] It means that you love Jesus. You don't want to let him down. You would never want to trample his name under foot. You'd never want to bring down the name of Jesus because you love him.

but that shouldn't allow you to follow him at a distance. That shouldn't cause you to stay where you are. Because Jesus is asking us today the same question he asked Peter when Peter saw his sin and his need of Jesus.

He's asking the same question. Do you love me? Do you love me? Well my friend how do you respond to that question?

How do you respond to the question do you love me? And if your answer is the same as Peter yes Lord you know that I love you.

Yes Lord you know that I love you. If that's your answer then today is the day you say to yourself and you say to the world around you I have decided to follow Jesus no turning back no turning back do you love me?

[41 : 08] May the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray. O Lord our gracious God we ask that thou wouldst bless thy word to us we thank thee for it that it is a precious and a living word and we pray that we would all respond as Peter did after he was restored and forgiven to say yes Lord you know that I love you help us Lord we pray to follow after Jesus or not to follow from a distance but to follow him closely to walk with him and to walk with his people to walk side by side knowing that it is such a great blessing and a great privilege to experience and to taste and see that God is good remember us we pray remember us this Lord's day as we rest O Lord help us to wait patiently upon thee go before us we ask and do us good for Jesus sake Amen we shall conclude by singing in

Psalm 73 Psalm 73 the last four verses page 316 4 pad Whom have I in the heavens high But thee O Lord alone And in the earth whom I desire Besides thee there is none My flesh and heart doth faint and fail But God doth fail me never For of my heart God is the strength And portion forever Down to the end of the psalm To God's praise And in the heavens high But thee O Lord alone

And in the earth whom I desire Besides thee there is none My flesh and heart doth faint and fail But God doth fail me ever For of my heart God is the strength And Lord alone Forever For glory I am far from thee

Forever May it shine And help you Neither You may never Lord But surely It is good For me That I draw near to God.

In God I trust that all thy works I may declare abroad.

[45 : 18] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.