

Alive In Christ

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[0 : 00] As good to be with you today as we come to worship God and become aware of the sad news in the community and we do pray for the family at this time to know God's comfort and blessing in these days.

And we look to God today as we come to worship. We seek His blessing over us on His word to us. And we're going to begin by singing to His praise in Psalm 100, the Scottish Psalter version of the Psalm, Psalm 100.

It's the first version of the Psalm. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, himself with mirth, his praise forth tell, come ye before him and rejoice.

We'll sing the whole of this Psalm to God's praise.

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, himself with mirth, his praise forth tell, come ye before him and rejoice.

[1 : 30] Know that the Lord is all-encompassing, with our charity did I say, We are His folk, He doth us be, and for His sheep, He doth us day.

O enter then his gifts with praise, appraise, with joy, His courts sound to, Praise all and bless His name always, our it is, sing His soul to, to.

Or why the Lord our God is true, His mercy is forever true, His truth at all times is true, and shall fall into it and you.

We come to God in prayer, let us pray. Our gracious Father in heaven, we come to bow in your presence today as you are a holy God worthy of worship and praise.

We thank you Lord that as we come to draw near to you that you have promised, to draw near to us. As we seek you Lord, we seek your presence, your comfort, your peace over us as a people, and upon us as a people, as your people around the world today.

[4 : 03] We thank you for these words we've sung, they remind us Lord that we are to be a people and nations of praise, that you call us Lord to come and worship you.

But we know in the world in which we live that there is many people and places where there is so little desire to even acknowledge you as God. They have their own gods in this world and maybe we are guilty of that ourselves that we make idols out of things in this world that come between us and you.

But we pray Lord that your word will soften our hearts. We thank you that your word is an enduring word, a word that stands the test of time for it is built upon you as its foundation and Christ our saviour as its cornerstone.

And we thank you for the power of the Holy Spirit that even today we come, not in our own strength but seeking your presence with us through your spirit.

To be with us in a mighty way, to bring your word powerfully to us, for we look to our only hope in life and death, our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

[5 : 13] And as we come to you to worship you this day we are aware Lord of those who need you in particular ways and especially with the sad news this morning of the passing of Chope.

We do commit this family, all of them into your care at this time and the congregation as a whole and all this community and as many friends far and wide.

We pray Lord your great comfort and your presence to be upon all at this sad time. Recognising too Lord that so often things come unexpectedly Lord but it's all in your plan and purpose.

Whether we think of our own communities or far and wide and throughout our world Lord in the situations that we see around us that can so concern us and trouble us.

And we think of particular places and people today such as Ukraine and many parts of the Middle East, many parts of Africa and the Far East too Lord with us.

[6 : 15] Wars and terror and persecution of your people. Far and wide we so often ask the question why in all of these things.

But we thank you that as we look to so many of the Psalms and look to your word. You're reminded that you give us the reason Lord that belongs to you. That it's not for us to decide what and when should happen but Lord it is in your time and in your will.

And so Lord help us to even pray today. Your will be done. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Lord help us to be a people who lean upon you. Who put our trust in you.

Who look to you for all our good and all our needs that we would find them in our Lord Jesus Christ. And especially as we think of this time of year when we remember his coming into this world for sinners.

But the ultimate purpose that he came to lay down his life. To give his life as a ransom for many. That we would know that even in this world when there are many troubles we can know his peace as we put our trust in him.

[7 : 29] And through faith in Christ we have that hope of eternal life. And we do pray Lord that we will come to know that great peace and that wonder of that amazing grace.

That Jesus would come and die for sinners such as we are. So Lord bless your word to us as it's preached not just here but throughout every pulpit today.

That your word will go out with power. That you will bless it to your end and to your cause throughout the world. We thank you that the promises will not return to you empty your void.

That accomplish every purpose for which you send it forth. So Lord bless us we pray continue with us. As young ones here we thank you for them. Thank you for this time of holiday and pray your blessing we fresh.

Children and teachers and parents too that will get a time out from work and different things. And time to enjoy a family time and time with friends as well. So we ask your blessing on us go before us now and forgive all our sin.

[8 : 32] We ask it all in Jesus name amen. It's good to see young ones here and perhaps there's some tuning in online as well. Are you enjoying your holidays? Are you enjoying a bit of time off just now?

It's nice to get a break from school isn't it? And you've been busy this week. You're just resting and relaxing all week. It's been kind of a funny week weather wise anyway hasn't it?

It's not been nice to get out and about to do much because the weather's been so cold. Well I'm going to ask you a question. Can you tell me, whether it being holiday time, what did you get for Christmas?

I got my little pony Play-Doh. My little pony Play-Doh. Excellent. You can remember. That's great. Can I be of course remembered what they got for Christmas?

You think to yourself, why on earth are you asking me what I got for Christmas? It's not the Christmas holiday is it? No. You look outside and as I was driving up here from Shrobbers this morning I was seeing the Harrah Hills covered in snow.

[9 : 43] You're thinking to yourself, it could be Christmas, the weather's been so cold. And hail shards. It could almost be Christmas but it's a strange question to ask, what did you get for Christmas? Because it's not Christmas holidays, it's Easter holiday.

Well this morning in the service we're going to be actually tying these two together. We're not just going to be thinking about Easter holidays, we're going to be thinking about Christmas as well. And the reason I asked, what did you get for Christmas was to see if you can remember what you got for Christmas.

Because when we're coming to the Christmas holidays we very often get excited about things. We look forward to Christmas holidays, we look forward to getting our presents and we look forward to opening them and maybe playing with new toys and things like that. We look forward to Christmas. But what happens is so often we soon forget what we got for Christmas. The excitement sort of goes away and we forget what we had for Christmas and then we just don't think about it anymore. But there's a Psalm in the Bible that says this to us. Psalm 103 and verse 2. It's a Psalm about looking to God and trusting God and blessing God for everything that he's done for us.

[10 : 54] And in verse 2 it says this, Bless oh my soul, the Lord thy God, and not forgetful be of all his gracious benefits he hath bestowed on thee.

So the Psalmist is talking about not forgetting everything that God has done for us. We can easily forget what we got for Christmas. But we remember what happens, what do we remember at Christmas time?

What's the main story we're thinking about at Christmas time? The birth of who? Jesus, the birth of Jesus. We remember the birth of Jesus but we don't want to forget about that.

And especially as we come to Easter we realise, not just was he born into this world but we remember that Jesus died in this world for us. And that's the amazing story the Bible tells us, that Jesus came to save us, his people.

So as we trust in him, we know that we are safe with him. So we don't forget all his gracious benefits, everything that he has done for us. We are to remember what he has done for us.

[12:00] Not just a Christmas or a Easter, but every day, whether it's a holiday day or a school day or whatever we're doing we always remember how good God has been to us.

And to thank him for every gift and especially that he gave us his son, Jesus. Well I think we're going to recite the Lord's Prayer together now.

So I don't know if we say that together. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

[13:13] We're going to read together now God's Word and Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. Ephesians we're taking up by reading in chapter 1, reading at verse 15 and reading down into chapter 2 down to verse 10.

So Ephesians chapter 1 at verse 15. For this reason because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints.

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.

Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened. That you may know what is the hope to which he has called you. What are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe. According to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

[14:21] Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named. Not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.

Which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

Following the course of this world. Following the prince of the power of the air and the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. A man whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh. Carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and whereby nature. Children of wrath like the rest of mankind. But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us. Even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. And raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

[15:33] So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace. In kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Not a result of works so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Amen. And may God bless that reading from his word. We again sing to God's praise this time in Psalm 34.

In the sing Psalms version. Psalm 34 we're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 9. At all times I will bless the Lord. I'll praise him with my voice.

Because I glory in the Lord. Let troubled souls rejoice. We'll sing from verse 1 to 9 to God's praise.

[17:04] Let troubled souls rejoice. Together let us praise the Lord.

And salt his name with me. I saw the Lord his hound sir came.

From pierced he set me free. They looked to him and shined with joy.
They are not food to shame. They suffered man, cried to the Lord.
From him deliverance came. The angel of the Lord surrounds.
[18 : 29] And God responds in rallying. All those who fear and adore him.

He sets his people free. Come taste and see the Lord is good.
He trusts in him his best.

O fear the Lord, you sin with me. You will not be oppressed.

We are going to bow heads and pray as we approach God's word. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven we pray you continue with us as we come to open up your word.

[19 : 45] We thank you Lord that we have that invitation in the Psalm we've just sung to come and taste and see the Lord is good who trusts in him his bless. We pray for your word to reach into our hearts and souls today that we will taste of your goodness and know your great mercy.

Your grace towards us through Jesus Christ our Lord. We thank you Lord that you are a God who speaks. You are never silent even though we are a disobedient people so often you still call us to come to you.

We pray we'll hear your voice and that we'll come to follow you today and in the days ahead. We do pray for the congregation here Lord continue to bless them to uphold them day by day.

We pray for Thomas and Phil as they preach week by week. We pray for their families Lord may you bless them and be with them day by day. They will be refreshed in time of holidays now and as they come back into the busyness of ministry and all it entails we pray for your encouragement towards them that they will see you Lord fruit for their labours.

We pray for elders and deacons and members and adherents here too that there will be a spirit of prayer and unity among all to see your goodness in this place to see your spirit moving powerfully Lord that is our longing and desire to see you come in your power to visit us as communities and peoples far and wide to know the power of your reviving spirit.

[21 : 23] So Lord we continue to look to you and you alone are able to bless so we cry to you as our Lord and as our God come and come in your power.

So here is now in all our prayers and we see our thanks and forgivers and we ask all in Jesus' name. Amen. Well we want to together look at the second half of our reading if you like we go into chapter 2 of Ephesians and these verses verse 1 to 10 which speak about the wonder of the grace of God.

We read in verse 8 there for by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing it is the gift of God.

We cannot save ourselves we learn that as we're going on in life maybe perhaps we still need to learn that lesson. We think we can do good ourselves we can think we can manage life in our own way and have control over our life and yet we come to a point where we realise actually we have no power in and of ourselves but we thank God that he gives us his word and it's a word that speaks powerfully to us and reminds us that in him we have power through his grace through his love towards us in Christ Jesus.

Maybe some of you enjoy doing jigsaw puzzles from time to time if I get a chance sometimes with children we like to get a jigsaw puzzle and start working on it together and sometimes you may enjoy doing a jigsaw puzzle there's a great sense of achievement and joy when you're making progress other times it can be a real sense of frustration.

[23 : 15] You might be able to get the outside part the edge all together and start filling in the easy bits in the middle the bits that come together more quickly but with so many jigsaw puzzles you'll find that a large part of it is maybe the sea or the sky or trees and everything looks the same and trying to fit all the pieces together can become more and more difficult as you're going on and the picture in the jigsaw isn't complete until the very last piece is put in and in some ways the Bible can be like that for us too many ways our lives can sometimes seem to be a jigsaw puzzle where for a time everything seems to be coming together and even as we're looking at the Bible things in it they seem to make sense to us we can understand great big parts of it we can understand the outline of it we can understand parts as it's all coming together but the more you're going on sometimes the more difficult it becomes to just piece everything together and the hardest part is often getting the last piece to fit to get it all to come together and when we think of this passage and the Scriptures as a whole and what the Scriptures are saying to us one of the hardest parts of it life is to have complete trust in the Lord to let go of everything that we are trying to do ourselves to let go of the

power and authority that we feel we have and the control we seemingly have of our lives to let go and to recognise apart from God we can do nothing and that last piece of the jigsaw is so often faith and maybe today you say but I have faith

I believe in God I believe that God sent his Son into this world Jesus Christ who came to save sinners and you have all these pieces that are coming together but you have that last piece that one last piece where it is faith in its entirety just that willingness to put yourself over to God completely so much you may have today but is there still that one piece missing?

Well here in Paul's letter to Ephesians Paul is preaching to them here reminding them of the completeness of life in God that apart from him really we have no life to try to live our life compartmentalized in that way of saying I'll have control over this and I'll give this to you Lord but I still want to be able to do my part it's to abandon all of that and to put ourselves fully over to God that's what Paul is saying to the Ephesians here it is by grace you are saved through faith and this is not your own doing he's very clear here this is not your own doing this is the gift of God and what an amazing gift it is and so here Paul is really bringing together so many different parts of scripture so many different parts of the teaching of the word of God both Old and New Testament he's reminding of the complete picture here that one last piece missing is faith to believe the word of God and as we think of this time of year and this holiday week ahead and a week today being Easter Sunday a time when we remember in particular in a more focused way if you like we're always focusing on Christ on the cross but this is a particular time of year when it's there for us to really look on and to ask ourselves that question today how am I alive?

what am I alive for? who is that is giving me life? Paul here speaks about us being made alive together with Christ by grace he says that in verse 5 we were made as alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and so I was saying to the children earlier on I want us today to tie together the two main holidays that we think of from the Christian calendar the Christmas holiday and the Easter holiday and the Christmas holiday we remember the birth of Christ and the wonder of that but what we see is as we look further on in his life and to his death we see the two cannot be separated they are linked together unless you think of the great passages that speak of the birth of Jesus such as for example in Luke chapter 2 where we read of the shepherds hearing the angels coming with this message to them about the birth of Jesus and the wonder of it all as they heard that God sent a savior into the world and the way it affected them it filled them with joy and the wonder of the birth of Jesus and how does that tie in to the message that we have here in Ephesians chapter 2 well in Luke chapter 2 the account of the shepherds tells us three different things mainly it says first of all to you a savior is born and then the second thing in Luke's Gospel it tells us that the shepherds heard good news and then the third thing it tells us in that passage is that having gone to see for themselves the Christ who was born they went away rejoicing and I also consider that in light of what we have here in Ephesians chapter 2 and Paul's teaching to them here of how blessed they are in Christ in his birth, in his life, in his death, in his resurrection in the eternal hope of eternal life with him and there's three things that tie in with the birth of Jesus and we can now together with the death of Jesus today these three things in Ephesians 2 first all have sinned the second thing is grace is the cure and the third thing is to be alive in Christ is the outcome of this grace so the first thing is all have sinned and again when you go back to the birth of Jesus and you look at the likes of Matthew chapter 1 verse 21 the angel there speaks to Joseph and gives him a word and he says to Joseph, she will bear a son and you will call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins that was the birth of Jesus but what did the death of Jesus accomplish? well it was the fulfillment of that he will save his people from their sins and so what Paul is saying here in Ephesians chapter 2 in order to show the people the great blessings that is there in Christ he takes them back to a previous time in their lives and he speaks to them about what they once were and he speaks powerfully to them about what they once were in verse 1 he says, you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked and that's how clear it is you were dead in your trespasses and sins and that is the reality for us all in our sin we are dead we're not alive we might think we're in control of our lives and we think we've got direction in our lives we've got our lives planned everything sorted for the way ahead but the reality is we are dead in our trespasses and sins and that's the reason why God sent his Son into his world you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins that is why he sent his Son into the world we needed saving from our sins

[32 : 34] Paul shows the nature of the problem lies with all he is speaking here about you were dead he's saying you Gentiles, you were dead but he's not saying that in the sense that oh but there were others who have always been alive there are others who are better people we can so often put people into categories ourselves and think well that's a good person they're much better than I am or ever will be but if you were to ask them what they really think of themselves they'll probably say no I'm just like you if they don't well they'll have to start looking at themselves in a different way because there is none who are good we are all sinners in the eyes of God and Paul outlines that here as well he goes from saying you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked in verse 3 he says among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh there is no one category or two categories in that sense of them and us

Paul is saying we're all the same all of us have sinned we are all like each other it doesn't matter who we look at or where in the world we are all in God's eyes sinners but the good news is that that's the reason he sent his son into the world Romans says we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God every one of us the talk just now so often is who's had COVID and who hasn't it's amazing how even in one household so many people in one household can get it and yet one person might be left out they don't get it it's amazing in that sense and it goes around some people haven't had it at all some people are getting it second third and even fourth time it's something we cannot understand in many ways and yet if we were to speak together about ourselves and the way we speak about COVID and ask ourselves are you a sinner?

have you sinned? no one could say well no I haven't yet well I've sinned two or three or four times it's not the way we speak about sin at all because there's no one that could say well I haven't sinned I haven't had that problem yet I hope I never do because it's unavoidable we are sinners and there's no getting away from it we sin as we say in thoughts and words and actions every day of our lives we fall short of the glory of God if we think otherwise we're thinking wrongly and we can so often be dismissive of sin we can make a joke about sin we can laugh about sin and we forget just how serious a problem it is there was a young boy who was listening to our minister preaching and he started speaking to him after the sermon he's been preaching on sin so the young boy started asking him questions one of the questions he asked was you say that unsaved people carry a weight of sin but he said I feel nothing so how heavy is sin?

is it ten pounds? is it eighty pounds? no just how heavy is sin? how much of a burden should I really feel if I was a sinner? the preacher replied saying to the boy if you laid a four hundred pound weight on a dead person would it feel that load?

the young boy replied quite quickly quite smartly it would feel nothing because it's dead the preacher said then the spirit is dead which feels no load of sin or is indifferent to it to its burden and its flippant about its presence you cannot joke about sin you cannot say I am without sin because as Paul is saying here you are dead in your trespasses and sin we are dead in our sin and that should shake us to the core to recognise where we are we may feel alive we may feel in control but without Christ we are dead in our trespasses and sin J.C.Rile the great writer once said Christ is never fully valued until sin is clearly seen and so the more we see our sin the more precious we should see Jesus and that God sent his son into this world to save him she was born into this world he came to live in this world and he died in this world for sinners such as we are the other thing we see here is that grace is the cure grace is the cure what do we need in our lives when we recognise how hopeless we are in our sin where do we go, where can we turn we begin to think to ourselves perhaps

[38 : 26] God cannot deal with my sin my sins are too many my sins are too big how could he possibly forgive my sin well that's the wonder of his grace his grace can save any and all who will look to him he has the power over sin and the psalm says who can stand before God if he should mark our sins against us there's no one but yet with him the psalm says there is forgiveness and that's the wonder of his grace and when you go back to the birth of Jesus and the account of the shepherds and the message that the angels had for the shepherds they said in Luke 2 verse 10 fear not for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people for unto you is born this day in the city of David David a saviour who is Christ the Lord there was good news for the shepherds and that is the good news of the Gospel and that is the good news that Paul has here he has good news for the people of Ephesus he's reminding them that they were dead in their trespasses and sins but you notice how he uses the words they're all past tense you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you once walked it's in the past among whom we all once lived in

the passions of our flesh he's speaking about something in the past now something's changed something changed in their life and their experience so that now that in a new condition that in a different condition and what is it that changed?

well it's that there's good news that is still good news it wasn't just at the birth of Jesus that good news was given it was in the darkness of the cross and it's crucifixion that there was still good news it's in the power of his resurrection that there is good news and it's the good news of the Gospel today as well that there is good news for us that there is grace through faith the whole situation here is turned on its head in two words as we have it in English you're speaking about verse 1 to 3 where he's speaking about what we once were how we were dead in our trespasses and sins and then in verse 4 if you look at it what it says but God but God these two words change everything little words are so important but God and this is the story of the word of God the Scripture good news we deserve no mercy we deserve our sins judged but God he showed mercy it's one of these hard to figure out jigsaw pieces as you're putting things together how do you understand that but God showed mercy

God showed mercy to me a sinner I cannot comprehend that I cannot fully understand it how can we understand it it's to look to the cross and to God who sent his son into this world as a savior that is the good news of the Gospel he didn't leave us in our sin even though he deserved it he didn't abandon his people and that's the wonder of the word of God as you start putting all the pieces together you begin to realise why did God abandon his people then when they made a golden calf in the days of Moses as they were being led into the promised land why would God show mercy there they didn't deserve any mercy but God showed mercy when you look at all the times they were turning against him turning away from him but God showed mercy he sent his word, he sent his son to speak to a people who were disobedient who were rejecting him but God showed mercy that version Ephesians 2 verse 4 is a wonderful verse but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses even when we were dead in our trespasses so as you live or have lived your life turning away from God, rejecting God sinning against God

God has still shown love from being objects of wrath dead in our sins the contrast couldn't be more different we are made alive with Christ it's such a wonderful image so we think we are alive today when we're living our life for ourselves but it's not life it's not life to the fool because that's the reason Jesus came into this world he came that they might have life and have it to the fool that's what he's saying to us today we are dead in our trespasses and sins but we can be alive in him and what does it mean for us today to be alive in Christ?

when you look at what was happening in Ephesus and Paul was writing here to Jews and Gentiles and this was what was uniting them together Christ was uniting them together and by his grace we are equal in God's sight we are made equal in our standing before him God sees us through Christ now he looks past our sin as we have faith in him we are made alive in Christ Christ died for our sins the death that we deserved he took so as we think of the wonder of his birth and the amazement of that as we think of the horror of his death and the cross and the darkness and everything that he brought upon him he died for our sins but we are also reminded that we have the hope of the resurrection in chapter 1 where we read in verse 19 it says that we might know what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places what he has done when he raised Christ from the dead that power it is ours through faith in Christ that is the whole story of the Gospel as the wonder of what it says in John's Gospel when it speaks about being made alive there and it says that he was dead, though he died yet he lived and that is the wonder of our life of faith in this world as we think of a mourning people all over in their community here in other communities today those who die in the Lord they do not die but live and they live eternally that is the wonder of God's grace to us and we experience that not through anything we do ourselves but through the gift of God's grace through faith [47 : 09] Martin Luther once said he averted the judgment of God from us that's speaking about Christ and appeased God's wrath grace therefore costs us nothing but it costs another much to get it for us grace was purchased with an incalculable infinite treasure the Son of God Himself what a precious gift we have in Christ the Savior that God sent into this world the third and final thing we want to see here is this is the outcome of our faith the outcome is that we are alive together in Christ and just go back again to Luke's account of the shepherds when they saw Jesus they went to

see Jesus it says in verse 20 of Luke 2 the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen which were just as they had been told they were praising God they were delighting in God who had reminded them that they were dead in their trespasses and sins reminding them of the grace of a Savior sent into this world and they were made alive as they went away and the question today is what are you alive for or what are you alive in this Easter if there's an element of boasting in ourselves if there's an element of pride in what we have done of ourselves and our own lives our hope has gone because we cannot save ourselves and that's why Paul is reminding them here so powerfully it's all of grace but to know this grace to come and taste and see the Lord is good who trusts in him is blessed to know this is to know life and life to the full we praise God for his mercy to us we praise God that he sent his son into this world we praise God that Jesus himself went to the cross for our sins saying Father not my will but yours be done and as he was crucified as he looked on a people he said Father forgive them they do not know what they do what love but he went to the cross and there we see how our redemption was accomplished he died for sinners even in the darkness and the horror of the cross his will was done so we might live you get beautiful sunsets

I'm sure you get them here as you do throughout our islands watch the sun going down and it's especially beautiful you watch the sun going down over the sea and so bright and red and you're seeing the sun just descending to the horizon and it comes to that point and you think to yourself it's coming into the sea it's touching the sea it's going down into the sea it's disappeared under the sea but it's never actually the case is it?

the sun remains at the same distance from the world all the time and what is that distance? 90 million miles and yet day after day and especially as we come into this time of year we feel the warmth of the rays of the sun that have travelled all that distance 90 million miles and we feel that warmth of the sun that are times when the sun seems to be so far away and there are other times when it just seems so close and for us, God can sometimes be like that as well there are times in our lives maybe when we push him away we put him at a distance or we think well God can't touch me God doesn't want me we put him at a distance but the reality is God is always near and there's never a time when he's not speaking to us and ministering to us and we feel the warmth of his word we feel the warmth of his spirit a life-giving spirit and we pray that today and in these days we will know that life-giving spirit of the power of his word and livening our hearts that we will be alive in Christ he is near and he is there for us

Psalms 147 verse 16 it says this, he spreads the snow as wool the frost like ashes on the land he hurls forth icy hail like stones who can such cold withstand if you think of the last week and the weather we've had it seemed like that kind of picture the psalmist there everything's cold, there's hail stones there seems no hope of warmth or life at times like that but the psalmist goes on and says this but when he sends his mighty word and makes the warm winds blow the frozen waters start to melt and once again to flow and as we go into this season of the year the winter will soon be a distant memory and the warmth of the sun will come again and give life to all around us what we need today is the power of God's word to bring life to melt cold hearts, frozen hearts and to make things flow again to give life in the love of Christ

God sent his son into this world to be with us, to be near us to bring the warmth of his love into the deadness of our hearts that we might have life and be made alive in him the Gospel as someone once said is this we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves that we ever dared believe yet at the very same time we are more loved, unaccepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope if you've ever done Christianity explored you will recognize these words there's something satisfying when you do abjigsaw of getting to the last piece and putting it into place and that jigsaw being complete but I'll tell you this there's nothing more satisfying in life than God working in your heart and helping you to bring all the pieces together you'll understand so much but you still have that one piece missing we'll ask Jesus to give you that faith that is the gift of grace a gift of God that centre piece to the puzzle that you will see Christ's birth

[55 : 08] Christ's life Christ's crucifixion and Christ's crowning and being awe of the beauty of Jesus that God sent him into this world for sinners such as we are that we might be saved through his grace and made alive with him for now and for eternity may God bless his word to us let us pray our Father in heaven we do thank you for your word we pray even as the psalmist had that you would send it forth and cause the icy waters to melt and flow again we pray for that warmth of your spirit in our hearts and in our lives in our churches and our communities that there will be an

enlivening of your spirit in our midst Lord we pray that you will begin in our own hearts the hearts that can be hard and cold towards you that give us hearts of flesh to love you with all our hearts to have faith in you through your grace that great gift towards us we pray it all in Jesus' name and for his sake and glory

Amen we are going to sing together in Psalm 9 as we conclude Psalm 9 in the Scottish Salter verses 7 to verse 11 Psalm 9 of verse 7 God shall endure for he he doth for judgment set his throne in righteousness to judge the world justice to give each one we'll sing from verse 7 to 11 Psalm 9 to God's place God shall endure for he he doth for judgment set his throne in righteousness to judge the world justice to give each one but also will our refuge be for those that are oppressed our refuge will be be in times of double true distance and it had no lie in me their confidence will face allow us more for sake and love that truly seek thy grace

O sing ye praises to the Lord that dwells inside on him and over his sons and all his deeds we are he said now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore Amen