

Christ, Our Propitiation

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[0 : 0 0] you you you you everyone, a very, very one welcome to Carlaway Free Church. It's really good to see you as

we gather in the name of our risen Saviour Jesus Christ. It's so, so good to be together. We meet to praise God, to sing, to pray together, to read God's Word and to think more about the Gospel. And it's so good that you're here as we have that opportunity to start a new week together in the presence of God. And if you're watching online, we welcome you warmly as well and we pray that wherever you are, you'd be built up and encouraged in your faith and that we would all be equipped to serve Jesus in the week that lies ahead. Just a couple of things to mention. The notices email goes out every week, but if any of you don't receive it and would like to receive it, please just let us know. Again, anyone who watches online, even if you're not from here, but want to keep up with the church news, feel free to get in touch and we'll add you to our mailing list. Just a couple of things to highlight. One is that on Thursday evening, it's our joint prayer meeting. So once a month, we have a joint prayer meeting with the Church of Scotland. This month, the Church of Scotland will be hosting. So that's 7.30pm on Thursday next door. I would really encourage you to support that. It's so, so important to play together and to always invest in the relationship that we have between the two congregations here. And even if you don't often or you've never before managed along on a Thursday night, I would just really want to encourage you to get there if you can. I actually won't be there after saying all that. I have to go to meetings, I have a meeting in Edinburgh on Wednesday and then in one in Renes on Thursday. I was going to say that's my last trip away from meetings for a while, but it's actually not because I have to go away in the middle of November. And then that's the last one for a while. And I'm sorry that I've had to be away so much lately. So next weekend as well, as you may know, it's very, very likely that I'm going to be appointed into the moderator for Kalanish following Cai's retirement. That won't be confirmed until Presbytery on Tuesday, but it's, we're all expecting that to happen. So that means next Sunday I will need to preach in Kalanish in order to declare them vacant and just to put in place some preliminary arrangements for the vacancy that they're going into. So please do pray for the Kalanish congregation and for Shobost, for Grava, for Stornoway, for the vacancies in our Presbytery that God would provide for them. Most importantly of all, we're here to worship together and we come to worship because God is calling us to worship. And so we begin our service with a call to worship where we want to be reminded of the truths that lie at the heart of the gospel that are the whole reason why we come together. I'm reading from Lamentations chapter three, verses 22 to 23. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning.

Great is your faithfulness. And it's in the reality of these great truths that we come together to worship tonight. We're going to sing and our opening singing is going to be in Gaelic. Each week we try to include a Gaelic element in our service. English and Gaelic tonight we're singing from Psalm 95 verses one to two. We'll have the English and Gaelic verses on the screen first. You can see that these words speak about singing a song to God, the joy that He's given us. So He's given us hope and peace and we express our thanksgiving and our gratitude to Him as we sing. Well, come, let us sing to the Lord. Come, let us everyone a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation. Let us before His presence come with praise and thankful voice, let us sing Psalms to Him with grace and make a joyful noise. I'm sure most, I'm sure all of you are familiar with singing in Gaelic. We'll sing the first two lines together and then from the third line onwards, Murdo will sing out on his own and we'll sing it out back in response and we'll worship together. And even if you haven't sung Gaelic Psalms often, give it a go and we'll lift up our voices to the praise of God. We'll stay seated as Murdo leads us.

I'm going to sing a verse here. I'm going to sing a verse from the Lord. I'm going to sing a verse from the Lord.

I'm going to sing a verse from the Lord. I'm going to sing a verse from the Lord.

[12 : 17] I'm going to sing a verse from the Lord.

I'm going to sing a verse from the Lord.

I'm going to sing a verse from the Lord.

Let's pray together. God our Father, we are so, so thankful that we can come to you this evening in the name of your Son and in the presence of your Spirit. You are our God and we bow before you. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so thankful that we can know you, so thankful that we can draw near to you and so thankful that we can hear your voice speaking to us through your voice.

We thank you for every blessing you've given us. We bow before you as our Creator, as the one who sustains the universe and as the one who provides everything that is good in our lives. We bow before you in thanksgiving and we also bow before you as our Redeemer, our Saviour.

[14 : 17] We thank you so, so much for the new song that you have put in our hearts through the Gospel and we thank you for the hope and joy that that gives us. And as we go through life as one week races into the next and as we all just experience the joys and the sorrows and the triumphs and the bruising that life can bring, we are so conscious that we need you so much.

And we pray, Father, that as we come to you this evening that you would just draw us into your presence, that you would still our hearts before you, that you would give us an attentive mind, that you would give us clarity of understanding and above all that you would give us an ever deeper burning love for you and for one another and for the people around us in our community.

We pray, Father, that as we come to you this evening that it will be an opportunity for us to reorientate our lives, to get our priorities reset, to have our desires purified, our choices guided and directed by your word and to have our motivations and ambitions for the week ahead and for the rest of our lives shaped by the Gospel.

And we confess, Father, that so often we get all that wrong, that our desires are mixed up and our choices are bad and our motivations are selfish and our understanding is so often foolish and so often we think that we know best, we go our own way.

And we come to you confessing that and we come again acknowledging our sin and recognizing that we need your forgiveness and we ask for that forgiving cleansing healing power to wash over us anew tonight, that any who have maybe not yet come to faith would come and taste and know that forgiving power of the Gospel in their hearts tonight.

[16 : 17] And for all of us who are following you that we would just be renewed and refreshed and cleansed and encouraged by you and you as we come to worship you. And so we come confessing our sins, we come in repentance, we come longing to follow you more closely this week and we thank you so, so much that the promise of the Gospel is that if we come to you, if we confess our sins, you have promised to forgive us.

And if we come to you with all our burdens, you've promised to take them off our shoulders. And we come to you in all our weakness and you've promised to take us in your arms and never let you go.

And we just thank you, never let us go and we just thank you for that so much. And we pray that the fullness and joy and reality of the Gospel would just fill our hearts and minds anew tonight.

Thank you for everybody who's here. Thank you that we have this opportunity to gather in your name. Thank you that we do so as part of a church that extends across all the nations of the world.

And we rejoice that as we sing tonight, as we pray, as we read your word, our voices are being added to the millions who are singing your praise across the globe today.

[17 : 32] And as we hear your word, we thank you that we are hearing the same message that is giving life to people all across the nations of the world today. And so we pray that you would bless us and bless all your people as we gather together.

And we pray that with one great voice, the name of Jesus, our only God, our only Savior, our only King, that his name would be exalted and glorified in our worship together just now, in our lives in the week ahead and in everything that we do for the rest of our lives.

May it all be to your glory we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. In our evening services, we have a short slot called Sulaire, which is a Gaelic for a look at. And we take an opportunity just to think about some aspect, either of the ministry of the Gospel here in Carlyway, or sometimes we look at resources for our discipleship.

Sometimes we think about the global church and sometimes we think about the national church here in Scotland. And tonight I want us to focus on that and I want us to talk, I just want to really share with you two, two encouragements for the free church of Scotland in recent weeks, both of which I was able to be a little bit of a part of over the past couple of weeks.

Two weeks ago when we were on holiday, we were in Edinburgh for church and at the evening service in St. Columbus, two weeks ago, it was a special thanksgiving service to mark the fact that the church plant at Esk Valley, which is in the Dalkeith area, has now become what we call a fully sanctioned charge, which basically means it's no longer a church plant under the kind of being supported and financially sustained by a mother church.

[19 : 15] It now is standing on its own two feet, said based on a congregation in its own right. And so the Esk Valley church is, as I said, based in the Dalkeith Midlothian area, the minister there for the last, for the past 10 years has been Tom Muir, and he was instrumental in the initial planting of that church, and he's seen it grow over the last 10 years, and it's now reached the point where it's standing on its own, and they're hoping that eventually they'll be able to plant another church in the area that we're in.

So that's a huge encouragement for us. The Domination talks a lot about churches being planted, and it's wonderful to see a church that's been planted now become an established church of its own, and one that's hoping to plant a new congregation itself in years to come.

So it's a massive, massive encouragement. And the other thing I wanted to share with you was just that yesterday, as I think you all know, I was able to attend Phil Pickett's induction in Livingston, and that again is a huge, huge encouragement for us, especially because Phil spent the second half of his training here being filled with some, and it's also just a huge joy and boost to see a vacant congregation being filled with somebody whom God has called into ministry and who has trained and now reached the point where they're ready to start ministry there.

So it was a wonderful service. I know some of you have been able to watch it online, and it's still available online to watch. It was brilliant. There was a great crowd there, a really good turnout, a wonderful spirit.

Lachlan, Phil and Helen were all in great form, and they seemed to be full of joy to have reached this milestone. Livingston congregation, some of you may have visited there, but it's a very similar size to our own, so they have 45 members, which is pretty much the same as us, I think.

[21 : 07] But in recent years they've grown, there was loads of children there. I was watching, and there's clearly a massive opportunity for the Gospel there.

I was on the way, I was getting a lift with friends, and they were saying, I wonder what the population of Livingston is, and I was looking it up, and it's now 57,000 people living in Livingston.

And I was thinking, that's about double what's in the Western Isles. There's 17 free churches in the Western Isles, so that means we need 35 free churches in Livingston, which is really quite striking when you think about just the need that there is for the Gospel to reach our nation.

There are so many people in Scotland who need to hear about Jesus, and that's why it's such a joy for us to hear about a church plant like Esk Valley becoming fully established, a congregation like Livingston getting a new ministry beginning.

And we want to pray not simply that Livingston would thrive, but actually in 10 years time that there will be two or three free churches in Livingston, and the many other places like that, but that desperately need to hear the Gospel. So Livingston Esk Valley are just big, big encouragements for us, but they're also a reminder that the need is huge, the opportunity is right there.

[22 : 31] The potential is amazing, and the most important question is, can God do it? Of course He can, and so we'll keep praying and we'll keep striving on together.

We're going to sing it together now, and we're singing the wonderful hymn, it was finished upon that cross which just helps us turn our minds to the cross, to what Jesus has done for us, and to the wonderful truth that lies at the heart of the Gospel, the fact that Jesus has done absolutely everything that we need for us to be saved, and for us to be brought into God's family again.

Our musicians are going to lead us and we'll stand and sing together.

The work is finished, He has spoken this hope to me. Though the sun that sees did shine, though the war appeared as lost, Christ had triumphed over evil, it was finished upon that cross.

By the curse it has been broken, Jesus paid the price for me, though the fire that He has offered, with the weapon that I receive, only I approach my Father, though in Jesus' righteousness, there is no more guilt to carry, it was finished upon that cross.

[24 : 57] Death was once my great opponent, near one side a hold of me, rose at the sun who died to save us, rose at we would be free indeed, free from every pile of darkness, free to live and free to love.

Death is dead and Christ is risen, it was finished upon that cross.

I rejoice in Jesus' victory, it was finished upon that cross.

We're going to read God's word together now. The passage that we're reading this evening is from Luke chapter 7. I'm going to ask Isabelle to come forward and read this for us.

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined a table.

[26 : 49] Standing behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the anointment.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said to him, Simon I have something to say to you and he answered, say it teacher.

A certain money lender had two debtors, one owed 500 denarii and the other 50. When they could not pay he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?

Simon answered, the one I suppose for whom he cancelled the larger debt and he said to him, you have judged rightly. Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

You gave me no kiss but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you her sins which are many are forgiven for she loved much but he who has forgiven little loves little and he said to her your sins are forgiven.

[28 : 15] Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, who is this who even forgives sins and he said to the woman your faith has saved you, go in peace.

Thank you. Thanks is about going to pray together again and as we pray it's just always such a good opportunity for us to come and lay our concerns and needs before God and also to take up the work of the gospel.

As we pray for God's kingdom to advance both in our own community and in other parts of the country and the world. So let's pray together. Father we thank you so much that we can pray to you and as we do so we are conscious of so many needs around us.

We see people suffering desperately in other parts of the world especially think of what we see in the Middle East at the moment and every week it just seems to get more distressing.

We want to pray Father for all those who are caught up in that conflict for those who are injured, those who are grieving and those who are living in fear.

[29 : 23] We pray Father for peace, we pray for de-escalation, we pray Father that those who have the power to make decisions would make wise decisions. And we pray Father that we just pray that next week the situation would not be as bad as it is this week.

And we pray for all those Lord who are in need there. We think also people in Ukraine also just living with that constant reality of conflict. We pray for peace there, we pray that that war would end.

And other places in the world where there's conflict, where there's unrest, where people live just in fear or in danger. We just pray for all those who are struggling and suffering. We pray for those imprisoned.

There's in your church who are suffering for their faith. We pray for those imprisoned, for those separated from loved ones, for those having to meet and worship in secret. May they be so encouraged by your word today and may they be sustained by you in the weeks and months ahead.

We pray to you Father for those in need around us here. We pray for those who are unwell in our community and connected to our congregation. We pray for those who are grieving. We pray for those who are facing difficult times just now.

[30 : 41] We pray for those who are busy and under pressure with their work or those who carry heavy responsibilities at home. We pray for those who've got difficult decisions to make. We pray for those who feel discouraged or who feel low in their faith and those who maybe feel low in their self-esteem.

We pray for those who struggle with anxiety and we pray for all those who maybe find it hard going into the winter months with the darker nights. We pray that for all the light and hope and joy of the Gospel would fill their hearts with renewal and peace and strength and that you would be so, so near to them.

We want to pray for our nation and we pray especially for the work of the Gospel to advance. We thank you so much for the news of Esk Valley becoming a church that is now able to stand on its own.

We thank you for all the ways in which you have provided for the work of the Gospel there. We pray for Tom Muir, his wife, Charlene, for the congregation with them, for the work that they are doing. We pray that it would thrive over coming months and we pray that they would be able to move forward with the vision to plant another church in coming years.

We pray to you for the Livingston Congregation and especially for Phil and Helen and Laughlin. We thank you for them so much and we pray that as Phil's ministry there begins that it will be accompanied by just a remarkable moving of your spirit and that there will be a huge encouragement for the congregation and that you would sustain them and uphold them, protect them.

[32 : 17] And we pray, Father, that the work of the Gospel there would thrive and we think of that town that's growing, that's got so many people and yet there's such a need for churches.

We pray that there would be more churches in Livingston in the years to come and we pray the same for other large towns and also for the less busy areas of our country as you come up towards where we live here, there are still so many souls who need to know about Jesus.

And we pray, Father, that you would give us this week a greater sense of urgency, a greater boldness, a humility, a wisdom and we pray that we would be able to speak to the people around us and that we will be able to say just how amazing it is to know you.

And we pray that that would draw people to come and to hear the Gospel and we pray that your word and your spirit would be pressed into people's hearts and that many more would come to faith in your Son or Savior Jesus.

As we turn to your word now, we pray for your help and we pray that you'd bless us and teach us and equip us and guide us so that we can know you more closely and so that we can live for you this week and for the rest of our lives.

[33 : 31] We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we're going to sing again from Psalm 71, singing from verse 1.

Oh Lord, my hope and confidence is placed in thee alone. And these words just speak very much of how in the face of maybe fear, opposition, difficulty, struggle, and the Lord is the one that we rest upon.

So, murder will lead us and we'll stand and sing together. Oh Lord, my hope and confidence is placed in thee alone.

Then let thy servant never be put to confusion and let me end thy righteousness from the deliverance of rosary sin and by my ear unto me at restrain.

Be thou my dwelling wrong to rich I ever be resort, thy wisdom and meant me to sing, or dirt my wrong and fault.

[35 : 30] 3D my heart from wicked hands and screw will land unjust.

Oh Lord, God art my hope and from my youth my God.

Well, in our evening services at the moment, we are doing a series called Five Cool Greek Words. And as you may know, the Bible wasn't written in English, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the New Testament was written in Greek.

And so every time we read the Bible, we are reading a translation of those original languages. And as I think I mentioned when we started this series a couple of weeks ago, when you're learning how to be a minister, when you're being trained, you're very often told, don't ever mention Greek words in a sermon.

And for this series, we are completely ignoring that. And instead, we're going to learn five very cool Greek words. And the reason that we're doing this is because what I hope will see is that learning the Greek word itself is going to give us a deeper understanding of what that word is conveying.

[36 : 55] And I hope that that deeper understanding will actually help us apply the Gospel to our lives more and more. So we're not just kind of trying to learn a sort of weird Greek word to be cool like that. Not that that's cool, I think it's cool, but nobody else does.

But it's more because this is, I hope, a really helpful thing for us in our faith. The five words are, homologueo, affiemi, logizomai, patria, macrothumia.

And we started a couple of weeks ago with this word, homologueo, which is the word for confess. And what we saw is it's actually a compound word made of two parts, homo, logeo, which literally means to say the same thing.

And it's teaching us that when we confess our sins to God, we're never surprising Him. We're simply saying what He's always been saying. And as we confess our faith, we are striving to say the same thing, to be united around the beautiful claims of the Gospel, unchanging truths that God reveals through His Son, our Lord Jesus.

Today we come to our second word, affiemi. So that's the Greek letter A. Easy enough, that's the sounding letter there. I, E kind of sound. The word that looks like an N, a long N is actually an A sound, which is really confusing, affi-A.

[38 : 21] And then that U with a tail is actually the Greek M. I think like if it's like, you use that in physics or maths for micro stuff, I think. Yes, you do, John's, my resident mathematician is telling me that's true.

So, and then again, I, so affi-A-me is the word and it appears in the passage that we read. Let me read it again from Luke 7.44. Turning towards the woman, Jesus said to Simon, do you see this woman? I entered your house and you gave me no water for my feet, but she's wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she's not used to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But he who's forgiven little loves little.

And he said to her, your sins are forgiven. Then those who are at table with him began to say amongst themselves, who is this who even forgives sins? And he said to the woman, your faith has saved you, go in peace.

Affi-A-me appears four times in that passage. It's here, here, here, and here. It's the word for forgive.

[39 : 31] But the reason I chose Affi-A-me as one of our cool Greek words to learn is because it actually has a much broader range of uses. Let me show you four other verses.

Matthew 4, 18-20. While walking by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers, Simon, whose brother will make you fishers of men. Brother casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

Immediately they left their nets and followed him. Mark 14, 6. But Jesus said, leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She's done a beautiful thing to me. Mark 10, 14. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said, let the children come to me and do not hinder them for to such belong the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 7, 13. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. Affi-A-me appears in all of those verses.

It's here. They left their nets. It's here. When Jesus said, leave her alone. It's here. When he said, let the children come to me.

[40 : 39] And it's here. It's the word translated, divorce. So it's got a very broad range of uses. It's a very rich word and this is a big concept for us to think about.

And all of that richness has a huge amount to teach us about forgiveness. And so I want us to think about that a little bit more. We're going to think about three headings.

Forgiveness leaves behind. Forgiveness lets go. Forgiveness grants permission. And for all of these, we're going to be thinking about how God treats us in the Gospel, about how we ought to treat ourselves, and about how we should treat other people.

So first of all, forgiveness leaves behind. On lots of occasions, the New Testament uses the word affi-A-me to describe leaving something behind.

As we saw, Peter, James and John left their nets and followed Peter, Andrew, James. Left everything and followed Jesus. Later on, Peter said to Jesus, we've left everything and followed you.

[41 : 54] Same word. The woman of Samaria left her water jar at the well and went into the town to tell people to come and see the man who told her all that she ever did.

And Jesus himself uses it in Matthew 18 when he talks about a man leaving 99 sheep to go and find the one who's gone astray. And so this idea of leaving something behind appears again and again and again.

In fact, one dictionary I looked at said that this word basically means to cause to leave a particular location. And all that's very, very helpful when it comes to thinking about forgiveness.

And the key point is this. Once our sins are forgiven, God has left them behind.

Now, this is so important for us to think about and it's pointing us to the decisive change that takes place in someone's life when they put their faith in Jesus.

[43 : 00] Sin has affected every single human being. Nobody has been left unaffected by the impact of sin. Every single human being is born carrying the guilt of Adam.

Every human is born into a world that is so badly broken by sin. We see that all around us and every human birth is actually stepping onto a path that leads to death.

And nobody is born outside that reality. The shadow of sin looms over every single one of us. The stain of sin leaves every single one of us guilty.

And the brutality of sin hurts every single one of us. And of course, that is the problem that Jesus has come to solve. Dealing with that is what the gospel is all about.

Jesus has come to defeat sin, to undo the damage caused by sin, to liberate those who are held captive by sin, to forgive those who are guilty of sin.

[43 : 59] And that's why when somebody becomes a Christian, when they come to faith in Jesus, a decisive change takes place.

Your sins are forgiven. All of your sins, past, present and future, are forgiven.

The power of death is broken. The stain of our guilt is washed away by the blood of Jesus. In other words, when we put our trust in Jesus, God forgives us our sin and when that happens, he puts us on a new path and he leaves our sin behind.

And of course, when we think about it, so much of our theology is actually grounded on this truth, of this emphasis on a decisive change taking place. We talk about conversion.

That's a decisive change. We are forgiven. Our guilt is left behind. We've gone from death to life, from darkness to light. In fact, the change is so big that the Bible describes it as a whole new birth.

[45 : 08] That happens through repentance, which again is a decisive change. It's a turning around. It's thinking in a new way. It's coming back to the Lord, acknowledging our sin and being restored by him.

And the result is our justification, whereby we're declared righteous. Instead of being condemned as guilty, our status has decisively changed. Our lostness, our guiltiness is left in the past.

And all of that prompts identification. All of that initiates the renewing process of sanctification. The Holy Spirit transforms us to live more and more as the new humanity that Jesus is establishing.

And in it all, the old is left behind. And of course, all of this is actually captured magnificently in the sacrament of baptism. That's part of what baptism symbolizes so beautifully.

The water cleanses us from sin. And the sacrament seals our membership in the church. It's all pointing to the decisive change that the Gospel brings.

[46 : 14] At the heart of the good news of Jesus is the amazing forgiveness of God. Our sins are taken to the cross, placed on Jesus' shoulders, and left there.

God takes us onto a new path. He leaves our sins behind. And it's so important that we do not underestimate the magnitude of God's forgiveness.

And yet we do that all the time. When we think about God forgiving us, we underestimate the magnitude of what has been said there. And that happens in two ways. We underestimate how big our sin is.

And we underestimate just how much God has left it behind. Our sin is our biggest problem, our biggest problem by a mile. Our desires are all messed up.

Our wills are corrupt. Our hearts are deceitful. Our motives are untrustworthy. Our words are careless and cruel. Our actions are selfish. Our guilt is inescapable.

[47 : 20] Our unworthiness is undeniable. Our failure is monumental. Our sin is such an enormous problem. And please, please never underestimate that. Never think that sin is just this we naughty thing that's just a little problem in our lives.

It's our biggest problem. It's humanity's biggest problem. It's the world's biggest problem. But if you are trusting in Jesus, or if you start trusting in Jesus tonight, we come to God in all the guilt of our sin.

And he says, I'm leaving all that behind. I forgive you. And that forgiveness results in a decisive, monumental, irrevocable change.

Your guilt is in the past. Your lostness is in the past. Your alienation from God is in the past.

The massive problem of your sin is in the past. For everyone who trusts in Jesus, God has left it all behind.

- [48 : 27] And there's two crucial lessons there. For the Christian, one crucial lesson for the not yet Christian. For the Christian, two vital things you've got to remember here. Number one, this is how you've got to view yourself.

Because any other way of viewing yourself is theologically wrong. So if you look at yourself, and I'm sure you do this because I do this, if you look at yourself and you think, I feel so guilty, I feel like a failure, I feel like my sin is dominating me, I feel like my mistakes are defining me.

If you think like that, then you are not thinking the way that God is thinking. In fact, this takes us back to our first cool Greek word, *homologhiao* confess, which remember means the same thing.

God's confession over you is forgiven. That is his confession over everyone who trusts in Jesus.

And so that's exactly the confession that you need to make over yourself every single day. So that's the first big lesson. This is how you've got to view yourself. The second big lesson, again, I'm sure you're even guessing what it is.

- [49 : 43] This is how you have to view every other Christian. Every other Christian has a past. Some people's past failures are very public, and other people are much better at hiding the stupid things that they've done or the behavior that they've committed that's awful.

But whether it's public or private, well-known or secret, all of us have a past. Every single one of us has a bad past. God has left that past behind.

And we need to do the same towards one another. Matthew was a corrupt tax collector. Paul was a vicious persecutor of Christians.

Thomas Davis was an idiot in lots of ways. But in the gospel, our past is left behind. And you know, that's why we can love each other, because every reason that we have to dislike each other has been left behind.

For every Christian, this is how we need to view ourselves. This is how we need to view one another. There's also a really important lesson for anybody here, or anyone watching at home who's not yet a Christian or not sure if you're a Christian.

- [51 : 05] All of this is teaching you that if you take that step to put your trust in Jesus, which we long for you to do, and you can even do it tonight, you can do it right now, if you take that step, what you've got to recognize that that step is not about taking stuff with you that you can hardly carry.

It's actually being behind a load that no one could ever bear. So often we think that we have to carry all sorts of stuff, all sorts of qualities with us into the kingdom.

We need more knowledge. We need better understanding of things. We need a higher standard of living. We need a life that's sorted out. We need a better level of worthiness. Jesus never asks you to do that.

Never. And none of us can do it anyway. Instead, Jesus asks you to come with all the weight of sin that's crushing you.

And by trusting Him and following Him, you can leave it all behind. Forgiveness leaves behind.

- [52 : 18] But forgiveness also lets go. And that's related to everything that we've just been saying, but it deepens the point and raises other important issues that I want us to emphasize.

Forgiveness means that our sins left behind, but even though we believe that, so often we still want to keep hold of it. So we find it really hard to let go.

And that's through our own sin, things that we feel guilty about. It's like, oh, still, it's like we can't let go of it. And also stuff that other people have done, either to hurt us or other things that have hurt people that we care about.

We want to hold on to it. Forgiveness lets go. I love the way *Atheaemi* is used in Mark 14, 6 and John 11, 44.

In Mark 14, Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus, so this is actually a different anointing to the one that we read in Luke 7. But in both situations, the onlookers are a bit horrified, and Mary is criticized.

[53 : 19] Jesus says, leave her alone. *Atheaemi* her. Even though everyone was saying, what a waste of expensive perfume.

And in John 14, you have this amazing raising of Lazarus from the dead. When he comes out of the tomb, he's got grave clothes wrapped all around him. Jesus says, *Atheaemi* him.

Unbind him, let him go. And all of this is conveying the language of release. And that's really the concept I want you to think about.

Mary is to be left alone to anoint Jesus. Lazarus is to be let go from the grave clothes that bind him. Mary is not bound by the criticism of onlookers. And Lazarus is not bound by the stench of the grave.

They are released. And it's all teaching us that when the gospel talks about our sins being forgiven, it means that God has put them behind us, and he has let them go.

[54 : 20] And here, in fact, we can actually, we actually discovered that the language of divorce in 1 Corinthians 7.13, same word, *Atheaemi*, is actually helpful.

We don't usually use divorce as a positive illustration, but we can in this instant, because if you imagine somebody who's in an awful marriage, somebody who has an abusive husband or wife, somebody who's just in a situation that's cruel, and manipulative, and horrible, the husband or the wife who is suffering in that kind of marriage needs to be released.

And once they are released, the abusive spouse no longer has any grip on them. And all of this is pointing us to the fullness of God's forgiveness.

When we come to God in repentance, God leaves our sin behind, God lets it go. The Bible uses, the Bible describes this magnificently by using the imagery of the sea.

Back in Micah chapter 7 verse 19, speaking of God having compassion on us, he will tether iniquities underfoot, you will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

[55 : 35] That's such a brilliant image, because you can only drop something into the sea if you let it go. When God forgives us, he leaves our sin in the past, he lets it go.

He does not hold onto it. He does not come back to it. He does not put it in his back pocket to hold it against you. He forgives you, and that forgiveness is so great, he lets it go.

Never forget that the one who wants to hold onto your sin is the devil, not God. Satan is the accuser.

He's the one who tries to drag up your past and who wants to haunt you with your failures. God says to his people, I will never do that. And this is so important, because if we think that God is going to keep on dragging up our stupidity from the past and the things that we've done that we regret, if we think that God is going to do that to accuse us and to shake his fist at us, then we are actually accusing God of doing something that the devil does.

If you are a Christian, or if you become a Christian, God remembers the number of hairs on your head. But the sins and mistakes that you've committed against him and that you are so ashamed of, he's long forgotten.

[57 : 07] The devil wants to hold onto your sin in the hope that you will get cast away. In the Gospel, God holds onto you.

And it's your sin that gets cast away. And this is so important for us to recognize, because so often we struggle to let go of sin, either in ourselves or in other people.

In terms of ourselves, this is why so many of us as Christians are plagued with guilt. So we feel insecure, we feel like we're a letdown, we feel embarrassed about our past, we feel ashamed before God, and the memory of our sin keeps piercing our hearts.

And the key point is that in the Gospel, it doesn't need to be like that. It doesn't need to be like that, because sin has lost its grip on you.

And yet so often we hold onto it, so often we struggle to let it go. But when it comes to the guilt of your sin, the words that Jesus spoke over Mary are spoken to you, spoken over you.

[58 : 18] Leave her alone. The power of God's forgiveness means that you can let go of your sin. You never need to hold onto something that God has long since let go of.

And a friend of mine was recently speaking about this, and he was saying, I was speaking to a friend, and I was struggling with a sin, and he was American, so he could say it much better than I can. But he said, my friend, he just spoke the Gospel to me.

He said, you're forgiven, move on. You're forgiven, move on. That is the power of God's forgiveness.

And that is the basic reality of what the Gospel does. But this is also incredibly important in relation to other people's sins. And this is one of the most fundamental and yet most frequently neglected by Jesus' discipleship.

We are commanded totally clearly by Jesus and in other parts of the New Testament that we are to forgive other people just as we have been forgiven ourselves.

[59 : 30] That is a no-brainer of New Testament ethics. Sometimes there are aspects of ethical decisions and Christian discipleship and morality that are unclear and people have different opinions on.

It's impossible to have a variety of opinions on this one. It's a complete no-brainer. If we are forgiven, we need to be ready to forgive ourselves.

And yet I have lost count of the number of times I've come across Christians who've been hurt by someone and they refuse to let it go. I've even heard Christians say, I'll forgive but I won't forget.

Well, we've got to realize that when we say that, God does not know what we're talking about. Because when he forgives, he forgets.

When he leaves it behind, he lets it go. And refusing to forget what someone's done for us, bearing a grudge and holding something against somebody even after years, is taking something from the past.

[60 : 37] It's holding onto it in the present and that's everything that affirms isn't. And of course the result of that behavior is so damaging to us because it just cultivates bitterness in our hearts.

And I'm sure you know that that's true. We see it around us all the time, that people, there's bitterness forming in their hearts and that bitterness is so damaging to us. And God commands us not to be bitter and he doesn't just do that so that we would be doing good ourselves.

He does that because it will do us good. Bitterness will eat away at your heart. Forgiveness will heal it.

And again, all of this makes perfect sense in terms of our theology. Holding onto sin, either in ourselves or in other Christians is incompatible with an efficacious atonement.

Now when I say efficacious atonement, what I mean by that is the fact that the cross is fully effective in what God has set out to do. And so God has set out to send his son so that my sins and your sins can be forgiven.

[61 : 55] And the effect of that is totally successful. The atonement is full and complete. It was finished on the cross. And God says the atonement has done everything that is needed.

And we say it's not enough for me. I'm going to hold on to that sin. I'm going to hold on to that bitterness. I'm not going to forgive. And that makes no sense.

It's just, it makes a nonsense of the Gospel. Jesus is saying, look, if you are forgiven, forgive others. That is the pattern.

It's a basic pattern of Christian discipleship. And all of this means that she's such a positive thing for us because it means that if someone else has, it means that if your sin is plaguing you, you can let it go.

Now, I want to say that again really, really clearly. If your sin is plaguing you, through the Gospel, you can let it go. Now, if you're a Christian and you still feel really guilty, maybe you feel gutted about something stupid you did last week, or maybe you're haunted by something that you did decades ago, you can let it go.

[63 : 11] And if you're not yet a Christian, but you're sitting here and you're thinking, I am not sure where I stand before the Lord. I'm not sure if my sins are forgiven.

And if you're thinking, I am not sure what is going to happen to me when I die. I am not sure. I feel conscious of my guilt. You can come to Jesus. He will wash it all away. You can let it go.

But it's also true of other people's sin. If someone else has hurt you, you can let it go. In fact, you need to let it go. You need to let it go.

So often we think that we will prove our strength and our determination by holding on. But in terms of the forgiveness in the Gospel, strength, determination and courage is shown by the person who's ready to let go.

In the Gospel, when it comes to the mistakes of our past, Christlike wisdom forgets. Christlike strength, let's go. Christlike steadfastness moves on.

[64 : 20] Christlike kindness takes no interest. Christlike record keeping is blank. Forgiveness leaves behind.

Forgiveness, let's go. But last of all, and very quickly, forgiveness grants permission. And that word, affi-a-mi, again, speaks of this. Mark 1.34, Jesus healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons, and he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him.

That word, permit, is affi-a-mi. And so here it's been used in a negative sense. It's used in a positive sense and a beautiful sense in Mark 10.14. So that's the negative one there, do not permit them.

Here in Mark 10.14, the children I wanted to come to Jesus, are trying to stop them. Jesus belongs the kingdom. Let the children come to me and do not hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

I can't even draw a line neatly without scrubbing out my word. And there you go. That's affi-a-mi, again, permission. Let them come to me. And in terms of forgiveness, this is teaching us a really important point.

[65 : 24] It's teaching us that forgiveness brings new opportunities. And that's a key part of the Gospel. As those who are now forgiven, we have permission and opportunity to live a new and a wonderful life as part of the restored humanity that Jesus is establishing in his church.

And that's because with Jesus, the people whom he forgives becomes the people that he trusts. Every one of us that Jesus has forgiven, every one of you who he will forgive when you come to him, he now trusts to serve him, to accomplish things for him, to carry responsibility in his kingdom.

And that's such an amazing privilege because it's reminding us that when Jesus forgives us, he doesn't just tolerate us. He honors us. Honors us with responsibility, opportunity, and privilege in his kingdom.

And that means that if you are a Christian, you're not just forgiven for the past, you're commissioned for the future. And that's why it's so crucial that your sins are not dragging you down again and again because Jesus has got far better things for you than to go around feeling guilty and useless.

You've been granted permission for a far better life than that. And we must never forget that the Gospel is not saying you're forgiven, but don't mess up again. The Gospel is not saying that.

[66 : 54] Oh, well, I'll forgive you now, but make sure you keep it up. Otherwise, you know, well, I'll have to rethink things. That is not the Gospel. The Gospel is saying you are forgiven forever and you have permission to live in a whole new way.

And the pinnacle of that permission is captured in Mark 10, 14. We have permission to come near to God, to be held in His arms, to become His beloved children.

And again, that must always shape how we view each other. In the community of forgiveness that Jesus is establishing through the Gospel, we have an amazing opportunity and an amazing privilege to serve together, to work side by side, hand in hand, to carry responsibility for Jesus, to be the ones who share this amazing news of the Gospel and to live our lives in a way that displays its transforming power.

In other words, the power of the Gospel means that we have permission to leave behind all the nonsense that makes life rubbish. So you have permission, if you are following Jesus, or if you start following Jesus, you have permission to stop worrying about how nice your house, or your car, or your clothes are.

You have permission for your self-esteem not to be defined by your beauty, or your intelligence, or your success, or your wealth. You have permission to not have to conform to the drinking, or the sex life, or the social media profile that everybody around you thinks is impressive.

[68 : 35] You have permission to leave all of that behind. In other words, in the Gospel, you have permission to be free.

You have permission to be free, to live for Jesus, to serve Him, no longer under what created you to be, to live a life, no longer under the control of all the false promises and the merciless expectations of a sinful, unforgiving world.

Jesus gives you permission to live in a whole new, beautiful way. All of this takes us to one final point, which brings us back to the passage that we read in Luke 7.

This passage teaches us that there is an inseparable connection between forgiveness and love.

Love and forgiveness go hand in hand. But you know, we've got to make sure that in the right order, in the Gospel, we're not actually loved because we're forgiven.

[69 : 57] We're forgiven because of just how much we are loved. That love of God is what motivated Him to send His Son.

That love took Jesus to the cross to die in agony for you and for me. And that love drives the mission of the Holy Spirit poured out and working all across the world and all across the ages of history.

We started off by saying that *affi-aimi* is a big concept. And I hope that it's been helpful to learn a wee bit more about it.

Maybe the most important lesson of all is this. God's love for you is so great. His forgiveness has to be this big.

So as we go away, I'm just going to leave you with three questions. Do you need to forgive someone?

[71 : 08] Do you need to accept that God has forgiven you and move on from guilt? And maybe the most important question of all, do you need to come to God for the first time tonight and say to Him, please forgive me?

Amen. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the fullness and magnitude and beauty of your forgiveness.

We pray that all of us would experience it and know it in our lives. And we pray that all of us would show it both to ourselves and to others.

Amen. We're going to close with the hymn, *Here is Love, Vast as the Ocean*, which just draws on that same beautiful metaphor of the fullness of God's love and the perfection of His healing and forgiveness in the gospel.

So the musicians will lead us and we'll stand and sing together. *Here is Love, Vast as the Ocean*, which just draws on that same beautiful metaphor of the fullness of God's love and His precious blood.

[72 : 55] Who is Love will not remember, who can cease to sing His praise. He can never be forgotten through attempt eternal days.

Through the hands of crucifixion, sands and soaps deep and wide, through the floodgates all cross mercy, load a past and gracious time, grace and love like mighty rivers, blessing from above, and hence peace and perfect justice, is the guilty world in love.

In Thy truth Thou dost direct me, by Thy spirit through Thy word, face my heedless beating, as I trust in thee, my Lord, of Thy fullness Thou art pouring, Thy great love and power on me, with Thy pleasure full and boundless, and my heart to thee.

Well, we're going into a new week together. As we do so, we want every aspect of our lives to be shaped by the Gospel. And so as you step out, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, all God's people say, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And all God's people say, amen. Thank you so much for being here this evening. We really appreciate you coming. We've got tea and coffee served from the hatch, as always. So we'd love for you to stick around to chat.

[75 : 03] Thank you.