

Looking UP, Looking Out!

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[0 : 0 0] week. We were dealing with the life of John, a kind of biographical, some MRI scans across his life to help us understand what it means to follow Jesus Christ, what is likely for us to come up in our lives. And we left him last week in Acts chapter 1. So I'd like to pick us up actually in the book of Revelation and then we'll skip back to Acts chapter 1 and kind of follow on and find out what are the things that we can learn from a life that's following after the Lord that we can apply to our own lives. I wonder if you'll just pray with me. Lord, it's so easy to come and tell a story but we need more than just, Lord, a compatible story. We need the truth. We need you to help us to grasp, Lord, what is the height and depth, the breadth and width of the love of Christ.

Lord, of your grace that carries us, that enables us, that deepens us in times of sorrows, that lifts us in times of joys, that holds us fast even as we hold fast to you. Lord, that helps us, Lord, bow the knee and raise our heads. We come before your throne today and we ask you, Lord, make our lives count.

We don't just want to be another tiny little digit on the landscape of history. We want our lives to reflect your glory to one degree or another. So here we are, Lord, we present ourselves to you this morning and ask that you take your word and minister to us in Jesus' name. Amen.

Last week we were looking back and looking forward. This week we're going to be looking up and looking out. Looking back and looking forward is really about, let's look back to see where John started and we're going to look forward to where he went. And we're going to end up in the book of Revelation where we're going to start our reading. Last week we looked at what was John like. I just want to catch you up and put you in reality about who this man, John, the Apostle John, was. We introduced him in the Scriptures when he's a fisherman with his brother and his father in the fishing business. Jesus calls him.

They leave their nets, him and his brother James, and they follow Jesus together with Simon and his brother Andrew. And we introduced him also as, him and his brother, as volatile guys. They're called the sons of thunder.

[2 : 3 0] And we discussed that last week. And they also knew the love of God. He was called the beloved disciple. In fact, John takes the term of being loved by Jesus in his gospel and he won't refer to his own name.

He just says the disciple whom Jesus loved. Because his experience of God was that he was loved by God. And he wasn't trying to self-promote. He was just trying to point people to the fact that when you really are called by God, you're pointing away from yourself a little bit of those sign boards that were on the previous slide. The sign board is not an end in itself. Union Chapel is not the goal.

The goal is the glory of God. But we are signposts. And we need to post our signs in which direction we're going very clearly. So here's John. We introduced him as a son of thunder, a fisherman.

We introduced him as one called by God. He's ambitious. He and his brother approached Jesus and say, Lord, we've got a favor to ask you. I'm ad-libbing now. A favor to ask you, when we get to your kingdom, can I sit on your left and he sits on your right? In other words, can I be the prime minister and he can be the chancellor of the Exchequer? Can we have really important jobs, please, in your kingdom? By the way, that sounds more like politics than Christian servanthood.

So they were on a process of moving from a very this-worldly approach to an understanding of a kingdom that operates on a different system. And one of the things that we have to learn to live is what John discovered in his life. We serve a different kingdom. I have lots of illustrations which I'm not going to bore you with today. But I wanted to say one. Some years ago, in 2004, I had a call to go and minister in England, lead an area of churches, get that area together, plant a church into Wales. And in that call, I couldn't go because I was South African.

[4 : 31] And then I happened to pass the consulate of the UK. And I went in and I said, listen, my dad was born in the UK. Does that mean I can get a British passport? They said, yes. I said, what? They said, yes. So I got a British passport.

And do you know what a shock it was? Because I was very active. I'm a South African man. Sorry, I'm a South African man. I'm also a South African man. All right? Sorry. All right?

And I got this passport to the post and I opened it up and I thought it would say South African British. It says British citizen. I'm thinking, no, wait, hang on a second. Who am I?

Which of these? Because my whole life, I'm an African. I grew, I was born here. I was raised here. And now it's telling me on this official document, I'm somebody else.

Now, when you become a Christian, when you move from just information about Jesus to a personal follower of Jesus, when you get out the fishing boat of your life and begin to follow him, your identity changes. And then what happens is we got to live in the good of our new identity and not our old identity. I hope that makes sense. And so we followed a little bit of the life of John last week, seeing what had happened. The son of thunder, the fisherman, the very earthly guy with ambitions, who, by the way, his ambitions didn't enable him to the other disciples.

[5 : 56] And then he goes up the Mount of Transfiguration. That's a story where Jesus takes Peter, James, and John, up this mountain with him. And then on the mountain, he's transfigured before them.

And he begins to, a cloud comes and surrounds them. And Jesus begins to shine with a great brightness. And he, he, they see him talking before them with Moses and Elijah.

Moses, through whom the Lord brought the law. And Elijah, the chief of the Old Testament prophets. And there is the one who is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets before them. And suddenly their understanding of Jesus' kingdom hits a new level.

And so what happens is, John is on this movement from being very caught up with this stuff to begin to understand there's a far greater kingdom and a far greater king.

And then, on Calvary, when Christ dies, I want you to understand, with that change, now the anticipation is, that's the kingdom that's going to be inaugurated.

[7 : 05] Instead, the king is crucified. And they're devastated. And they're locked up. And the women come with a report. He's risen. And John, we're told, he runs to that tomb.

And there he looks and he sees the grave clothes, like a cocoon that's collapsed. The body is risen. Jesus has risen. And Peter and, Peter and John ran to the tomb.

And they're looking there and we know the story. Jesus appears. And then at the end of the Gospels, Jesus gives him this commission. Now the resurrected Jesus, before he's ascended, he gives them this commission.

Go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Guys, we're at the southern tip of Africa. The Gospel came to us. Because the commission was being fulfilled by previous generations.

This church is founded upon one of the principles that undergirds this church 211 years ago this month. Is missional Christianity. Christianity which takes the good news to those who don't know the good news.

[8 : 08] Together with help for those who are suffering social injustice. And a clear biblical perspective of evangelical Christianity.

So there's this spectrum. John, you know, John, he didn't know he was waiting to meet with Jesus, but he was. And you may be here and you think, look, I've been in church before.

You may even have grown up in church. It doesn't make you a Christian any more than working in McDonald's makes you a hamburger. Alright? Alright? You can be there all the time.

What makes you a Christian when you get that and you say, I'm following him now. And then things begin to change. And you're no longer patterning your life after what's pressing on you and what's really this world.

You're patterning your life on eternal truths that really do help us in times. Like when you have to make decisions about politics. It's so much easier to say, look, I'm just going to ignore it.

[9 : 07] I'll go and I'll hope I'll have a revelation when I have to make the cross. Or I'll just vote like I've always voted. I'm not telling you to vote for it. I'm just saying, take it to God.

Get some peace. Make that cross. Now we're going to come to this passage. Now, this is a long way down the line. It's probably written towards the end of the first century, around about AD 95, when the emperor Domitian was running the empire.

And the empire was not a kind and gentle force. John. I'm going to start in verse 7 because it's quite a long reading.

Behold, he's coming with the clouds. This is talking about Jesus. Behold, he's coming with the clouds. And every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.

Even so. Amen. I am the Alpha and Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

[10:19] I was in the spirit on the Lord's day. And I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches. To Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. And on turning I saw seven golden lampstands. And in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

The hairs of his head were white like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze refined in a furnace. And his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars. From his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword. And his face was like the sun, shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.

But he laid his right hand on me saying, Fear not, I am the first and the last. The living one. I died and behold I am alive forevermore. And I have the keys of death and Hades.

[11:28] Write therefore the things that you have seen. And then he goes on. Let's pray. Lord this is your word. Thank you for it. And now we ask you to help us to pick some of the fruit from this world, this word.

And ask you to help us to grasp it, eat it, and live in the good of it. We ask that in Jesus' name. Amen. Right.

There was nobody in the entire world at this juncture, and since then, who had more right to say, I know everything there is to know about Jesus Christ.

Nobody in world history has been more qualified than the Apostle John at this stage to say, I know it all. He'd been with Jesus for three years.

He'd been the earliest witness of the resurrection. He'd seen miracles in Acts chapter 2. He'd been filled with the Spirit in Acts chapter 2. They'd seen miracles in Acts chapter 3. Acts chapter 4, opposition starts.

[12:38] He'd lost his brother to persecution, James, his brother. He'd gone through that grieving. He'd seen churches planted. He was now moved from the Apostle of Thunder to the Apostle of Love by 1 John.

The one who wanted to call down fire upon the Samaritans in the Gospels because they wouldn't receive Jesus was now the one who's saying, brothers, love one another. The one who was actually really a thunderous guy with ambition was now the one who was serving the churches. He'd become a father figure over the whole of the area around Ephesus and in Asia Minor to the churches. And now, because of his preaching of the Gospel, the Emperor has exiled him to an island so he can't cause any more trouble.

Didn't work very well because 2,000 years later we're reading what he wrote which we wouldn't have heard if we just said it in a sermon. Ha ha. Can I just say I was in one particular country, let's just say what it was, I used to work with the persecuted churches, I was in China and I realized that Mao Zedong had done a really good job of persecuting the church and a really good job of making the Gospel expand because he made everybody in China who had many different dialects and languages all learn to speak, read and write Mandarin.

So with one language the Gospel could go out along the highway, very much like the Greco-Roman world with the Greek language which was like a covering language of all other languages was used for the Gospel to explode.

[14:24] Mandarin became the way the church exploded underground in China. Lots of stories, come and ask me to have a coffee one day. That means you ask me for coffee. Alright? Alright?

So here's John, Revelation, he's exiled on this island and what's happening is he hears this voice and he turns around to see who's speaking and he realizes who it is and he falls on the ground as

though dead.

The man who knew more about Jesus Christ than anybody else, he was the one who laid back on Jesus' chest because Peter said to him at the Last Supper, when Jesus said, one of you is going to betray me, Peter said to John, ask him who it is.

Again, I'm ad-libbing. Right? But that's kind of how it went. Right? And so John turned because he was leaning against Jesus, Lord, here is it. He was that close. The one who knew himself as the beloved disciple.

That guy who'd moved from a son of thunder to being an intimate acquaintance, a real friend with Jesus, a real submissive follower of Christ, a real servant of the church, one now who's written the gospels, he's written other letters and now he's exiled on an island because of his faith in Jesus Christ.

[15:43] He's seen miracles, he's been with the Lord, he's been up the Mount of Transfiguration and now he meets Jesus as he is in the kingdom. This is Transfiguration multiplied.

He turns around and he sees Jesus in his glory and he falls on his face as though dead. Can I just suggest union? God in our minds is too small. We've got to allow God to fill the scripture with meaning rather than us trying to analyze God.

Let God come to you. When we begin to grasp the enormity of God stepping out of heaven's eternity into this world's fallen history as a human, fully God, fully man, and living the life we should have lived so that on the cross the substitutionary death of Christ is he offering a perfect life in exchange for our brokenness and sin.

When you begin to understand the enormity, you begin to understand that when Luther once said when Christ came heaven was empty, he wasn't talking that God had ceased to exist.

What he was saying there was nothing left in heaven's treasure vaults that would pay for the redemption of mankind. Nothing was left. God gave it all.

[17:06] He was all in on the cross to redeem mankind for himself. You see, John had been caught up in the Mount of Transfiguration and he'd seen this and he had an inkling but he saw it again.

And by the way, there's huge references back to the book of Daniel which we don't have time to go into. But what John was seeing was not the theology of Daniel but what Daniel was describing in his vision, he was seeing in himself.

And sometimes we have to move from theoretical understanding to personal knowledge. Have you ever told you the story about the guy, how many of you like sticking sticks onto marshmallows and burning them on the fire?

Okay, good. I'm in good company. Alright? Story goes like this. You've got a five-year-old. Boy. He's making a boy. Alright?

I know you're not five years old anymore but I'm just looking at you guys. Alright? Alright? Okay?

And dad takes him out and says, son, go into the back bridge of the car.

[18:10] You'll find my special marshmallow bribe pack. Always keep it for occasion like this. Goes in, there's a little pack. Dad's, American's got a pack for everything.

Right? Sorry, guys. Right? And on the, you know, you open the pack, there's the packed of marshmallows. There, there's sticks and there's a little fire and you ignite the fire with an igniter. He says, son, now there are great things that you need to understand. Sticks a marshmallow on it. He puts it on the fire. He says, son, the first thing you learn is this tastes good.

Gives it to be something fantastic. The second thing you learn is don't leave it on too long because first it catches the flame and then drops on the fire. Okay, dad does. And the third thing is when it drops on the fire, do not reach in and take it out because you will discover it burns.

It looks like you can just reach in and take it off but it'll burn you. Son says, okay, dad. Of course, dad's an expert. Nothing drops in the fire. But some weeks later, the son decides he's going to unpack dad's car and quickly while dad's not looking have his little own marshmallow fire in the back garden.

[19:20] So he's having a marshmallow fire in the back garden with dad's equipment and of course, he gets distracted as young guys do and the marshmallow catches on fire, drops in the fire and he forgets that his dad said, don't put your fan in, take it out.

He said, it looks fine. Poof, five little bonfires, one in each finger. At that moment, he's moved from theory to reality. He's moved from information to personal revelation.

All of a sudden, it's no longer a theoretical fact, it's the proof of five little blisters on the end of my fingers. And what happens when you become a Christian, you get into that place where you meet the living God and it's wonderful because you know a lot about him.

You've come to church. You know a lot about him but you need to let that be worked through in life so that it begins to take shape. It begins to live in your life like leaven and your life begins to take shape.

It's true. He's faithful in the valleys and he's faithful on the mountaintop and he's faithful in every degree of height or depth between those two places. And he's wonderful and glorious.

[20 : 31] And my job today isn't to describe anything other than to say here's John the man most likely in world history to know everything about Jesus. But he's surprised by the glory of Jesus even though he was at the day of Pentecost, even though he was with Jesus for three years, even though he was up the Mount of Transfiguration, even though he'd seen miracles and seen nationwide evangelistic explosion of being a father in a church, he was surprised by the glory of God and the God of glory.

And I want to say to you my prayer for this church is this, that that which we know in truth, I was going to say we'll burst into flames on our fingers but it's not quite what I mean. We'll move from theory to reality.

We begin to worship the living God because he's real and wonderful. He's not just a composite figure of our doctrinal clarity. Our doctrinal clarity is doing the best we can to describe the God of glory who stepped into this world to rescue us lost sinners and bring us home to be with him.

So here's some surprises that will surprise you as John was surprised. Firstly, God's love and his integrity. For a lot of us, we know the story Jesus died upon the cross but we don't realize that Jesus' death on the cross was honoring God's own integrity because for God to forgive us he had to have issued the judgment of death upon sinners and we've all sinned and fallen short of God's glory.

Now because of that, his integrity couldn't say, you know what, I'm just going to forgive you. I'll just go. No, that's corruption, not integrity.

[22 : 19] God can't, God won't say one thing and do another. He says, no, the soul that sins shall surely die and death isn't the absence of physical life, it's eternal separation from the father.

So on the cross, the son steps into the place of the broken sinner and takes our punishment and dies our death and when Jesus says, my father, my father, why have you forsaken us, forsaken me, it's because the father turned his back on the son so he could turn his face towards the sinner. that's us. So in this looking up at God's glory, you've got to really understand, it's looking out towards the lost humanity.

God's love and God's integrity, the word soteriology means our salvation. God didn't decide one day, I'm going to be kind and just forgive people since, no, I'm going to plan it.

The old, Old Testament sacrificial system pointed towards the one true sacrifice to come who is Christ. Once and for all, the price was paid upon Calvary.

[23 : 30] If you're not at that point where you realize I need to be forgiven, let me help you. You do. Because we all do. There's sins of commission, there's sins of omission.

Bad things you have done that you ought not to have done are sins of commission. Good things you ought to have done that you've left undone are sins of omission. Trust me, by the time you're old enough to work out the two words, omission and commission, you've committed both.

All right? Secondly, God's methodology. Once you're incorporated into Christ, you cross into this new kingdom. And when you're in Christ, the kingdom of the Son whom He loves, He begins to use the broken things of the world, us, to reach other broken things with the good news.

So the word apostolic really has to do with the messenger. And I want to point it out. It comes from, I'll give you an illustration. There's a city-state. You know those walled cities they used to have? Hello? Okay. Stay with me here. Walled city. King advances from outside to attack the city. So they lock up the city and they send their army out over the hill to go fight from the top of the hill down against this army it's coming against.

[24 : 48] This is an illustration. All right? And the people in the city can see the noise, hear the noise and see the clouds of dust and they can hear the screams and the fighting but they don't know what's happening down in the valley just over the hill.

And then over the hill comes riding a man on a horse and he's carrying with him a message and he slides to a stop at the gates and he says oh wait, hang on I've forgotten the message.

No, that's not what he says. But there are too many churches that have forgotten the message of the gospel. He comes riding over from the battle still dirty with battle fatigue and he stops at the gate and he says it's okay the victory has been won.

What you're hearing now is just the sounds of the mopping up. We're just sorting out the prisoners and stuff. The victory is won.

The church is carrying into this broken world locked behind their doors of fear no matter how impressive they think they are. We've got to come with the message of the battle has been won. [25 : 55] All that's happening now is a mopping up operation just out of sight. The victory has been won. The king of kings is coming. You see, God's church has a purpose to carry that message to a lost, broken, bruised, and really confused world.

And finally, we've got to keep God central. Now, I want to come back to this revelation story, book of revelation. Right. I want to suggest, how many of you have read books about the end times that delve into the book of revelation?

Hello. Yeah, I've got, the first one I read was The Late Great Planet Earth by Hal Lindsay. Please don't read it. Right. But I thought this was it. My pastor gave it to me.

I was brand fresh as a Christian. Everything was about the second coming and the beast and this and that and the other. And so I read this book and I was completely, I thought, wow, this is incredible. And then I read another book and it was completely different to the first book.

And I thought, okay, hang on a second. Now I'm confused. I read a third book which is different to both of those. And I thought, now I'm really getting confused. And when I went back to my pastor, he says, no, you know what? They're all wrong.

[27 : 09] Listen to my theology. And he was even more confusing. So what I'm going to suggest to you is that there's a central figure in the book of Revelation we obviously, we often read past and it's the person of Jesus to help you.

The second coming isn't about the second coming of Israel and the first coming of the beast. It's about the second coming of Jesus Christ. the king of kings, the lord of lords.

Let's have a look at some of the Christology of Revelation. In chapter one, we've just read, it's Christ communicating with his church. He says, I'm the one. Write down what you see.

I'm the Alpha and Omega. Beginning and the end. He's communicating. Then he goes and he does an inspection tour of the churches. He goes into the churches and he says, let's go back to the church.

He goes to the various churches and he diagnoses their situations. They were all real churches. They were based on the trunk roots around Ephesus from which John was based.

[28 : 19] He went around and he said, this is what's good about you. This is what's not good about you. This is what you need to do and this is the reward or the punishment you'll get if you do or don't do it. Make sense? He was not, he was not there to massage egos.

And I repeat this. Jesus didn't come to the church to massage their ego. He came to format them for life with a kingdom perspective. When I came to this church, my dream was what I'm seeing today.

Every tribe, every tongue, every nation. For those guys visiting from Spain, thank you for being with us. It's really lovely to have you with us. If you're visiting from somewhere else, I didn't have a chance to pick up with you, please grab me afterwards and say you forgot me.

All right? Christ in his church is Jesus walking. He's saying, guys, this is what I know is going on in your church. This is how you need to respond to this so that the gospel, the message that you're carrying can come with integrity to the people outside.

And then you see Christ in the cosmos or in another way of pointing it, I've got to get here, it could be Christ in his heavenly glory.

[29 : 31] John's taken up and a door's left open in heaven and he sees the Lord and he sees the throne room and he's amazed by what he's seeing. He's seeing again what he saw in the Mount of Transfiguration in Revelation chapter 1.

Now he's seeing more detail and he sees the scroll and everybody's crying because nobody can open that scroll and that scroll is the redemptive plan of God. But only the lion of the tribe of Jews that Jesus himself can break open those seals and let God's redemptive plan begin to flow out into

the world.

He's the center of our redemption. He's the center of revelation. He's the center of our message.

The church is God focused and Christ glorifying and gospel promoting and gospel based.

And then you find in the revelation you find him in conflict there's battles and all sorts of things the Lord of the Rings has nothing on revelation. Right? And then you see him at the end you see him crowned coming in glory.

And then he challenges us what are we going to do with this? And my job this morning is simply to say to you he who began a good work in us will bring it to completion.

[30 : 46] If we hold on to him don't lose focus and allow him at times to open up the scriptures in a way we haven't seen before and move us from just theoretical agreement to personal commitment.

My last illustration. There was a tightrope where I use this if I've told you this before forgive me just live with it. It's the last time I'm preaching here so you're going to have to get over it.

His name was Blondini. He was a well known tightrope walker and he needed to raise some money so he stretched his tightrope walker across the Niagara Falls and hired out bleachers for people to come and watch.

And he walked across with his balancing pole across the Niagara Falls. This is a true story this is not made up. There are some photographs on the net of him from those years back. And he walked across and then he came back without his balancing pole.

By now the crowd was large and cheering. And then he took a wheelbarrow and he wheeled it across. By now they were really going mad. And then he put a sack of potatoes in the wheelbarrow and wheeled it back across.

[31 : 53] And now the crowd were going that's my way of saying clap, clap, clap. Alright. And he stood at the front and he said do you believe I could put a man in this wheelbarrow and we could wheel, wheel, I could wheel him across safely.

And everybody said yes. So he said to the guy in the front okay jump in. The guy said no thanks.

The one with intellectual agreement the other one was personal commitment. And today I'm saying to you if you've been vacillating about who you're going to serve get in the wheelbarrow.

He's really worth serving. There comes a time when you need to hear the call of God and say yeah I'm going to follow him. So where on the spectrum are you?

Are you waiting to meet Jesus and follow him? Well then get in the wheelbarrow. Yeah it does cost but man is worth it. I've got story after story of how God has supplied in my life in ways I just think I don't understand why he uses a broken guy like me.

The other thing please keep your sense of humor because you're going to need it when you look in the mirror. Okay. Our position in Christ is not of how we respond to him but how we acknowledge that he has initiated this and he has responded to our need and so instead of rejecting his response to our need we are embracing his grace for what we need.

[33 : 22] It's not how strongly we hold on to God but how wonderfully he's cupped his hand under us and he's bringing us to himself. Our position is justified declared not guilty because he who was without sin and without guilt was declared guilty.

Welcome to your new identity and if you haven't made that decision today is the day you can get in the wheelbarrow come and speak to one of the leaders afterwards it's a process as well as a decision because you need to understand what it is you're believing and why you're believing it so that you can actually follow through.

Secondly following Jesus and working on stuff oh welcome to the rest of your life once you're in the wheelbarrow. None of us finish this world perfect.

Here's our example John book of Revelation if anybody in the whole world history had an opportunity to work on his life and actually grow into as near perfection as possible it was John and he actually saw Jesus and he again fell on his face as though dead.

Why? Not because he was bad but because he was overwhelmed by the glory of God. Start your sanctification which is your condition your position is you're a child of God your condition is you're still messy like the rest of us.

[34 : 41] Okay? Oh is that only me? Okay? Work on your stuff but don't think he won't use you despite your stuff because as you deepen your relationship with the Lord he will grasp he will grasp his love for you and you become that beloved disciple for yourself knowing the love of God not based upon performance but based upon his grace towards you in Christ and he begins to give you responsibility the thing I didn't mention earlier was you remember there was that story where on the

cross Jesus looks down and sees his mother and he says to John the disciple he says son behold your mother mother behold your son and he entrusts his mother to John and Jesus in a way has entrusted the gospel proclamation to the church the message of the gospel how we do it how we carry it how we live it out in relational integrity not perfection integrity integrity doesn't say I'm perfect integrity says look I'm very aware that I'm not perfect but I intend to care for this message and make sure that my life begins to be formed increasingly towards that and I want to present it clearly to others so like that rider coming over from the battle when I get to the door where people are saying what's going on

I can give them a clear response and say the battle is won and articulate the gospel clearly for people and then finally we carry that message as a group of believers I feel the church is like you breathe in on a Sunday and everybody comes in and we get informed and encouraged and envisioned and then the church we breathe out and everybody goes like salt and light into the world again and then next week we come back for a refresher a reigniter and out we go again we breathe in a lonely Christian an individual Christian outside of the church is like an ember from a fire will soon go out I'm not going to bother with these we've done that so when we look towards communion now we're not looking on the basis of I take communion because there's nothing wrong with my life I take communion because I know I need a saviour and I've embraced Jesus Christ as the saviour

I know I'm not able to stand before God on my own works I know I need to have Jesus righteousness given to me and I'm very willing to let go of my own sinfulness to him when you come to communion we come to the glory of God manifest for us in the person of Christ we come to it's not the bread doesn't become the body of Christ the wine doesn't become the blood of Christ but we remember and there's that special time when we say Lord this is the covenant you've made with me and I want to say to you this morning you want to have a healthy church stay gospel based make sure it's God centred Christ honoring and personally it's moved from just theory to personal experience and application and when we come to communion this morning if you're a child of God if you've made that commitment to Jesus Christ if you've got in the wheelbarrow don't come here on the basis of your performance you'll come on the basis of your position not your condition but if you need help with your condition you get help in the church speak to one of the leaders people walk beside you and help you to be discipled come to the seminars help you to pray help you to understand the word of God can we pray

Lord we are extraordinarily grateful this morning that we come to a God who hears our prayers thank you that we can't perform to get your attention the work has been done the battle has been won we're just in a mopping up operation won't you help us as the body of Christ as Union Chapel as individuals following you to together be those who carry the message firstly to our own lives and secondly to others we ask in Jesus name Amen