

Saturday Communion Service

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Date: 04 November 2006

Preacher: Douglas MacKeddie

- [0 : 00] I would like us to turn this evening for a little time to words we have read in the New Testament reading in John's Gospel in chapter 17.
- I'm reading at verse 6. John 17 verse 6. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou hast given me out of the world.
- Thine did they wear and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.
- My apologies, David. I should have said to you that I was going to read the introduction year two in the authorised version, and I hope you don't mind. It's just the one that I'm so used to and familiar with.
- But I would like to, this evening for a little time, by way of preparation for the communion Sabbath morning, to discuss a theme with you which I think runs through the whole of this intercessory prayer of Christ as it has been spoken of.
- [1 : 18] And the theme is basically the Christian life. What's it all about? Why am I a Christian? Very often that question we may ask of ourselves with a good spirit.
- There might often be the case, of course, when the devil might come and assail you and say, why are you a Christian? What makes you a Christian?
- Never mind the theological answer that you could give. What makes you a Christian? What makes you different to anybody else that's walking out on these streets this evening?
- As a Christian. You don't wear a badge. So you're not telling anybody, by this very gate of your life, in the sense of walking down the street, that you are a born-again believer.
- What right have I got to call myself a Christian? Is it because I believe in a certain amount of doctrines?
- [2 : 29] Is it because there is something in my genetic makeup? Something in my family makeup? Is it because I was born into this thing called Christianity?
- That I was born into a church, which is a branch of the Christian church? Does that make me a Christian? It may be the case that we might feel a certain degree of confidence, knowing that we were brought up in a Christian community, in a Christian family, with God-fearing parents.
- Maybe that might be your status. But what really makes me a Christian? What was it that enabled Paul to say, you remember, when he was writing to the Galatians?
- He loved me and he gave himself for me. What made him be able to say that? Was it a presumptuousness? Was Paul thinking of himself about what he ought to think?
- He tells us, no. He says that I am the least of all, brethren. He says, I am less than nothing. He thinks of himself.
- [3 : 53] Very often he displays himself and presents himself as the most unworthy creature that ever walked at his earth. The good that I would, he says, I do not.

The evil that I would not, that do I. O wretched man that I am. And yet the same man can say, Jesus loved me.

And I know it. As the children have been writing to put it, the Bible tells me so. The word of God tells me, Jesus loves me.

Tonight, before I sit at the Lord's table, can I go along with the apostle Paul and say, he loved me.

He gave himself for me. Of all the people in the world, of all the wretched people in the world, of the most unworthy people of the world, of all the people, there is none so full of sin as me, says the apostle Paul.

[5 : 00] Yet, he could say, he loved me. He gave himself for me. You know, I think it would be very good for us.

It would be a healthy exercise. If almost every day, maybe more than every day, we read through this intercessory prayer of Christ, because it's all about you, about me, about him, about God the Father, about God the Holy Spirit, and how everything is working together for our good, and for his glory.

How is it that I can say this evening, before I sit at the table of the Lord, that the invitation of Christ upon me to come and to eat and to drink those symbols of his broken body and his shed blood?

Well, Jesus tells me, Jesus tells me how it is I can do that. How it is this evening I can call myself a Christian without presumption, without in any way thinking of myself above what I ought to think.

We know how easy we can think above our status and our station. It is so easy to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.

[6 : 45] But let Christ be for us. Because at the end of the day there is nobody else upon whom we have got confidence whatsoever, surely there is none like to do Jesus.

No, not one. He'll tell you. He'll tell you more about yourself than anyone else can tell. And he'll tell you truthfully.

Or yes, maybe under his fearless eye. You feel convicted. and that's good.

It's always good when the spirit of conviction comes upon us. But oh, it's always good also when I can hear the words of Christ ringing in my ears saying to me, come to me.

Come to me. All you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you.

[7 : 55] Learn of me. Learn from Christ what Christ has got to say about you this evening. Or what others are saying. And not necessarily what you're saying about yourself.

because he knows everything about you. There is nothing that is hidden from him. What is he saying here this evening in the words of this intercessory prayer?

And remember, this intercessory prayer is not something that was said and forgotten about in its content. Every single part of it it is ongoing all the time.

every statement of this intercessory prayer is ongoing in the heart and the soul of Christ as he intercedes even now for the church that is his own.

This Christian life that you and I have found ourselves of being part of it's never been an accident. it has been a purpose.

[9 : 04] There is purposefulness in it and it began with God and you see that from the very words of Jesus himself. Wherever you and I might have thought we have come from in terms of sociology and so on what is it with regard to our spiritual awakening into everything?

In verse 6 we are told that we are not are we not that of the Christian in his or her life we have it there in these words of verse 6 I say Jesus have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world thine they were and thou hast given them to me and that is tremendous that God the Father the Holy of Holies should look upon this poor wretched sinner from all eternity and give that soul and everything to Christ he or she belongs to you and you know Christ is glorying in this very fact and if I am speaking to someone this evening who is maybe cast down in spirit overwhelmed yes as we all are so often with the unbelief that stops our hearts the things that we don't do that we should have done and the things that we should never have done that we have done even with these things clouding over us let's look through the fog and see what

Jesus and listen to what Jesus is saying here yes poor wretched sinner and all that we are yet Jesus is making the announcement this Christian life of mine has not been begotten by my actions or my activities or my goodness no this life that was once right down in the gutter this life has been given to Christ you wonder sometimes do you wonder very often there are things that causes us separation between us and God and between our perception and our acceptance of the love of God for a poor wretched sinner very often what comes between us is the unbelief that not taking on board the greatness of the work that has already been done and wrought for us in Christ

Jesus as Jesus intercedes here and he says he prays for them he prays for them and secondly he says that thine he says thou givest in me out of the world we who were dead in trespasses and sins have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ the children of the devil yes he might have once been we might have been under the control of the evil one and maybe sometimes even yet we feel the evil one not very far from us and we feel yes rightly so sometimes unworthy even of the very name of Christ upon our lips but let that and let not that reality cut across the truth as it is in Christ

Jesus and what is being stated here God the father gave them to the son he gave you and me to Christ yes words and all as we are but there is something else that Jesus draws attention to in this in this great chapter and that is the fact that yes we are still here God Christ is gone he's in glory now he is glorified with the father that was his plea at the very beginning glorify thou me with the glory which I once had before the world began and he is here interceding for those whom the father gave has given every last one of them he's praying for you tonight he's interceding for you tonight and he's conscious very conscious that you are in a world that's what he's saying the

[14 : 15] Christian the Christian those that are united to Christ are still in this world those of us that are still alive we are still in this world is that something that causes Christ any concern of course it does it causes him great concern listen to the words of verse 11 and now he says I am no more he says in the world but these these are can you not even hear almost the compassion of Christ as he pleads for the church as he pleads for each and every one of us as we are beside of eternity still in this world these are in the world he says that's the reality verse 15 I pray he says

I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil if there's anything that Christ is concerned for you and for me this night it's that those whom the Father has given him will be kept kept for what purpose in Jesus of the way he's in glory he's with the Father we're left here alone not at all never alone every step that you and I take on this life journey in a world in which we are found which is very much identified with a cesspool this world surrounds us and it swirls around us we see it in all its darkness and its bleakness oh please

I'm not suggesting for one moment that there is nothing in this side of eternity for the believer to encourage and strengthen the believer of course there is even the consacrament of the Lord's supper itself it's a blessing that we ought not to take lightly and we ought to take surely with gratitude to God that such a provision has been made for us but Jesus knows only too well that those whom the Father has given him are still in this world and he is concerned that this world doesn't only just nibble away at them but eat at them and gorge at them and do death spite to them bring them down oh yes it is so easy in this world for the temptations of this world to overtake it so strongly and it's very very interesting that the one with whom we can all identify in the person of Peter was the one who truly believed that encouraged the churches of Asia

Minor to be assured that they are kept by the word of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time oh yes you and I are kept oh we fall and we fall abysmally and every one of us knows how easy that is Peter did it if Peter could do it you and I could do it oh Peter and you and I can be though mainly Satan has desired to have you has he not there's not one soul in this building that Satan doesn't want he desires to have us each one that he might sift us as wheat oh Christ knows that we are in this world and oh yes we might be a redeemed people but we are a people that are in constant need of the very presence of

Christ the presence of his promise the presence of his truth the very presence of the spirit with us all the way you remember the picture I'm not sure if I referred to this before when I was here the last time but the picture that is set out for us in the song of Solomon in that final chapter of the song where we have a picture there of the church of Christ coming up out of the wilderness leaning upon her beloved the question has been posited who is this coming up out of the wilderness leaning upon her beloved who is it it is none other than the redeemed of God it is none other than those who are chosen from the beginning from the foundation of the world it's none other than those whom the father has given to the son none other than those for whom the son even now prays and intercedes

[20 : 14] I pray for them at this moment I'm not praying that thou should take them out of the world but that you should keep them from the evil if there was anyone who understood the evil activities and intents of a world that was fallen since the time of Adam Christ is the one that knew Christ he tread the wine press more than you and I could ever have done no one had suffered the extremities of temptation of taunting no one had suffered as much as he did and all that he offered purpose that you and I might have life in him what does it mean for you and

I to be left in the world oh I think there are a number of things that we could speak of there but this chapter does verse 14 not suggest to us what it's all about Christ in verse 15 is praying that we be kept from the evil in verse 14 he is saying I have given them thy word and the world have hated them because they are not of the world that's a rich statement and it's one that should soak into our souls day by day we are not of this world it's not just that this world is not our home we know that we understand the adianic covenant we understand that this world is not our home there is somewhere yet that is to be revealed for us in the last day but we must walk in this world and live in this world and be hated by this world even as

Christ himself was hated remembering that we don't belong here here we have no continuing city we have a city according to scripture whose builder maker is God we have a home that we're heading towards and it's nothing like this one nothing at all in that home in that place of which we told earlier on in this gospel a place of many mansions or many rooms that Christ has gone before us to prepare for us and in that glorious inheritance that is the people of

God what like is it in comparison to what life it is here considering this is not at home what life is the true home of the believer well it's where Christ is where Christ alone is and where there is no sin there's no pain there is no more suffering all these things are done away with if you haven't you and I might be hated by this world that is very true and Christ tasted it for us but he is reminding us through this intercessory prayer this world is not our home there's a place of many mansions and there is going to be some one great day when all those who live in

Christ all those who die in Christ all those who are lived by Christ will be gathered together in one in glory beholding the lamb in the midst of the throne what is the Christian life it's one that is Christ centred Christ is all and in all for me says the apostle to live is Christ to die is gain what gain but we are in this world Jesus recognizes that he recognizes the help that we need the intercessions that we need he understands the need that we have of the spirit of Christ the holy spirit to come and to help us and to nurture and to usher us through this world but there is something else

[25 : 52] I think that we must not forget and we forget to our peril and to the peril of others as we walk to church or however we got to church this evening we might have passed many of us all without Christ and without hope in this world and maybe there are times that we have felt a degree of guilt that we haven't found ourselves opening up and sharing a word to those souls that are without Christ and without hope those that are in this world without hope those who are in this world who are like those of whom Paul was writing to the Ephesians when he was identifying their status before they came to faith in Christ without hope and without

God in this world now I know you and I can look back reflectively and say I thank God that I have hope I have God and I have Christ I thank God that he took me from that fearful pit he set my feet upon a rock and he established my goings but you and I have a purpose in this world as long as we are in it it's not just to survive that's what God will enable us to do it is the keeping power of God cracked by the power of God but there is something else that is of significant importance and that's where Jesus here tells us what we are to do in this world remember Jesus prays in this prayer he says

I pray not only for them but I pray for those who will believe in me through their word Christ has opened a door for us for every single one of us to go out of here and to preach the word of God and even a book just now which is an old a book that was handed down to me some way or another by an Ernest Last I don't know if you've ever heard of him he was a minister in Glasgow and he wrote this little book which is very very up to date on how will the churches grow you might want to ask a question how are the churches time how are they dropping in numbers but

Edward Last points us to the fact that you and I have been given a message a message of hope and assurance for our own eternal well-being that we have nothing to fear time or eternity there is no more condemnation for you and for me not yet why do I say that why do I say that there is no condemnation yet because I think the church of Christ in the 21st century is robbing people because it is not presenting the gospel as it showed it is not going out in the ways that it is shown we're looking for methodology we're looking for ways and means of trying to get the message out when all we are called upon to do is speak that's what Christ says I pray for them he said I pray not only for them but for those who will believe in me through their word and there is a catalogue of them that are presented for us in the

New Testament itself even if you started with the woman of Samaria there was one who was responding was it not was she not to this kind of intercession of Jesus she went and told all people she told everyone that she could she went out there she was fearless in presenting the gospel she wasn't afraid to name herself as one of those who was a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ as thou hast sent me says Jesus in verse 18 even so I have I also sent them into the world Christ was given a commission which he fulfilled the church has been given a commission has she fulfilled it we might ask the committees in Edinburgh to do things may be right that's true certain committees have certain responsibilities according to legislation of

[31 : 34] General Assembly to go to do this and to do that to modulate things in such a way that we can preach the acceptable word of God but are we doing it at the end of the day if you and I stand under the assuring word of this intercessory prayer of Christ that you and I are called as much as any preacher of the gospel we are all called to speak forth word and season go into all the world said Jesus where is your world where is your community where do you live who is your neighbor tell them you know this Jesus and he knows you there's no one has got more authority to speak for

Christ than the soul that was mine and sin that has been redeemed by his precious blood what is a Christian someone who was born again yes that's true what is a Christian what is the Christian life for me to live is Christ my life is Christ there's nothing more important in my life than Christ now I hope no one is turning around and saying what about my family what about my friends what about my neighbors that's all included if you're living for Christ you're living for all those for whom Christ speaks and intercedes in this very prayer itself you're looking for direction am I needing direction of course

I am we all need direction in the Christian life that it all radiates from the one Jesus the son of God who loved me and who gave himself for me I hope I haven't discouraged anyone in anything I said and I hope that I would encourage anyone here that is concerned about their own spiritual life in relation to Christ in relation to your neighbor in relation to your family remember the Christian life is Christ centric centric no one like Christ and may Christ and his drawing power the drawing power of his mouth draw you to the table where you will once again participate in those great emblems of his broken body and shed blood why in remembrance of me he said in remembrance of me till I come till I come and remember he is coming he's coming he's coming for his church and when you and

I sit at the table we are expressing that longing come Jesus come not just tomorrow but come come take his church that has been born in his time and bring us all to himself shall we pray