

Communion Friday

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 May 2007

Preacher: Roddy Rankin

[0 : 0 0] Well, we need to try and do what that psalm tells us to do and calm our spirits to receive God's Word tonight.

Perhaps you've had a busy day, or maybe like myself, for the last four or five hours my brain has been overstimulated with the onslaught of traffic on the A96 and beyond.

And we need to shift gear to listen, to listen to God.

And that's what the privilege of a weekend like this gives to us. Time to listen to God. We're going to go back to Luke's Gospel in chapter 10.

And focus upon Luke 10 and verse 21. What we're thinking about tonight is seeing life, seeing ourselves, seeing our circumstances from God's viewpoint.

[1 : 1 7] That's what we want to try and do. And I want to try and keep that theme, at least to some extent, over the weekend. Seeing from God's viewpoint.

Seeing as much as we are able through God's eyes. So Luke 10, verse 21. The 72 have just returned from this amazing ministry of proclaiming the coming of God's kingdom, healing the sick, casting out demons.

They're so amazed the demons submit to them in the name of Jesus. And we read in verse 21. At that time, Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, God, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. God, sovereignly revealing the mysteries of his kingdom to little children.

Jesus delights in it. He rejoices in it. When you become a Christian, and probably most of you here tonight are Christians, perhaps not all, but whatever, when you do become a Christian, it involves a considerable change of viewpoint.

[3 : 1 0] A lot changes. Things are seen in a different light. As we sang in the first psalm, we're now singing a new song.

We are thinking about ourselves and about our conduct and about our understanding of the world and of the spiritual realm in a new way.

And as we grow as Christians, our viewpoint should continually be reforming and changing and transforming so that we become more and more men and women and young people who view life the way God views our world.

We want to see the world in the way that God wants us to see it. But what often happens is that as we have passed through the drama of conversion, and it might take a period of time, or it might be very sudden, and come to a basic understanding of what it is to be a Christian, and found a kind of level to operate on in our new life as people at work, as people in our family, as people in our study, with our circle of friends and so on, and found what it means in those different contexts to be a Christian, then often, without really realizing it, we settle down into a fixed way of thinking.

And we stop changing. We stop traveling. And the view becomes fixed. The view becomes fixed, not because we've arrived for God wants us to be.

[5 : 12] The view becomes fixed because we've stopped traveling with them. Because being a Christian is about walking with God. And if you go for a walk, then the scenery is continually changing.

And so if the scenery of your Christian life has stopped changing, you've stopped walking with God. And that happens very easily. It can creep up on us that one day we realize, I'm stuck in a rut.

Things have got a bit stagnant, a bit static for me in my Christian life. And we've settled into a certain viewpoint, as though that is the place we were destined to stop, as though that is where we ought to be.

And we've all got a viewpoint. But if you're walking with God, your viewpoint should continually be changing and developing, as God reveals Himself to you in new ways.

One thing that irks me, as someone living in the northwest of Scotland, quite far north, a good bit further north from Aberdeen, is the BBC weather map.

[6 : 39] Okay, right, I've got a few smiles of recognition. I don't even need to explain myself, I don't really do it. It's the perspective, isn't it? The perspective of the map is all wrong, because it magnifies the south of England, and it diminishes the north of Scotland.

And if you live up in Shetland, you've almost disappeared off the end of the world. And I'm sure that it's unconscious of the London-based BBC weather people.

that their particular perspective is as it is. You see, they live in London. So, they come to work, and if it's bright sunshine, they announce to the country, it's a lovely sunny day, and it could be absolutely foul in Kyle, or in Aberdeen.

But they are in a certain place, and their viewpoint is the viewpoint of that place. You know what I would really love to do, is to, or I would really love to see one day, is just for some Scotsman to read the weather on the BBC, and for the map to come up with north or south.

So that the north of Scotland's at the bottom, with that enhanced perspective. So that the south of England is kind of tilted away, and the north of Scotland is brought out closer.

[8 : 23] Because it's still Great Britain. It's the same place. Exactly the same place. But just seen from a different perspective. the perspective I see it from.

Now we make so many assumptions in our perspectives, don't we? For example, the assumption that north is north and south is south. If map making had been invented in the southern hemisphere, then everything would be upside down on our maps to what we have just now.

And indeed, at the bottom of the map would be the north of Scotland, of a map of UK and the north of England. The south of England would actually be at the top of the map.

We make assumptions without thinking. This is the way that it should be viewed. And as Christians, we can settle down into that. We've got our new view.

We've become Christians. We've found our way of thinking. And we settle down. We adopt a certain viewpoint and it becomes fixed.

[9 : 32] And we stop realizing or we stop traveling. We don't realize that we've actually settled into a certain way of seeing things that may be very much better than the way we used to before we knew Jesus, but has still got an awful long way to go.

See, the London-based viewpoint is based on the fact that London is full of all the things that man highly esteems.

It's full of people. It's full of lots of different kinds of people. It's full of celebrities. It's full of great entertainers, sports people.

It's got the royal family, people of noble birth. It's got great academic institutions, seats of learning. It's got brilliant people.

And it's got wealth. It's got money. And that is why if you're there living, it's very difficult to avoid settling into a mindset that here is the center.

[11 : 00] Here is where it's really at. And you can probably do that in Aberdeen as well. I'm sure that you can do that in Aberdeen so that looking over to Kyle, man, that's just about off the end of the map too.

Aberdeen is where it's at. It's this great oil capital. It's a place of wealth. It's a place of movers and shakers. It's got a great number of students and the cream of the intelligentsia.

They've all come down from the highlands and so on and all here in Aberdeen. And it's such a great center. But, is our thinking in that case being formed from God's Word and from God's view of the world?

Jesus says that the Father has hidden the kingdom of heaven from the wise and the learned and revealed them to little children.

And what perhaps we need to learn to see more is that child-likeness which doesn't get impressed by someone because they're wise and learned, because they're rich, or because they're some great famous personage, who simply trusts, simply trusts God, the Heavenly Father, and walks with Him.

[13 : 10] See, our significance as people does not come from how much money we have and it doesn't come from our IQ or our degree or the prestige that goes along with our job.

It doesn't come from who our parents were. It doesn't come from our positions of authority in the church even.

Our significance comes from God and God alone. I was really struck a couple of weeks ago when there was a great excitement at the announcement of a new planet that's been found.

It's a mere 20 light years away. That's not very far. It's only 120 trillion miles away. So it's not very far in astronomical terms.

And an artist had drawn his impression or her impression of this planet. And I'm sure you all saw the pictures. It was a kind of dull red star that this planet's going around and they've already found much bigger planets around this star.

[14 : 33] But what was really exciting was that there was a planet that was probably not that much bigger than the earth in the particular position where it wasn't too close or too far away from that sun so that water could be a liquid on the surface of the planet and maybe then it could harbor life.

And so this artist had drawn this impression of this planet going around this red star just 20 light years away. and in the sky around the star there were lots of little pinpricks of light.

And I thought well if you live on that planet if there is life on it don't myself believe there is but if there is and you live on that planet you might look up at the sky and see some tiny wee dot 20 light years away and not think much about it.

But that tiny dot would be our sun. And you might just never ever know that around that tiny dot there was a lovely blue green planet which we call our home.

Because seen from 20 light years away where we are tonight is of no significance at all. And you know that's just the backyard of the universe.

[16 : 05] That's just a tiny tiny distance away. Tiny distance away in terms of the universe. We're of absolutely no significance whatsoever in terms of the universe.

I often wonder how scientists study these things intently every day. Astronomers who grapple with these figures and these distances and the vastness of space.

How they can even remain sane and think that whatever they do and whatever they say is of any importance at all compared to the vastness of the universe.

universe. Because without God we're just nothing. Without God planet earth is totally irrelevant to the universe.

it's only God that gives us significance. It's only God that actually makes you and me of any value at all.

[17 : 18] And the really wonderful thing tonight is that God not only knows this planet but he has put in this planet a people who are made in his image.

image. And when we fell from that image and lost it and broke it and marred it furthermore he sent his son. And his son came and took a human nature.

He took the nature of the life form on that tiny little planet around an average sun at the outside of the Milky Way galaxy among billions of other galaxies.

He sent his son here. And that is what gives us significance tonight. We are in the world to which Jesus Christ came.

In which he lived. In which he was human like you. And that is why it is so important to see things the way God sees them.

[18 : 28] Because if we don't see from God's viewpoint then we nothing is significant at all. It is only God's viewpoint that gives us significance.

It is only God's viewpoint that gives us value. And that is what Jesus is delighting in in this little passage.

He is delighting in in the way that his Father in heaven gives to this planet its significance.

And gives to people their significance by revealing himself to them. Revealing himself.

himself. And he doesn't reveal himself to people because they're rich. Because what is wealth on the scale of the universe?

[19 : 33] He doesn't reveal himself to people because they're of noble birth, of privileged upbringing. because what is nobility on the scale of this universe?

He doesn't reveal himself to people because they're greatly gifted, because they're great artists, great musicians, great physicists, great intellects, because what is human intellect on the scale of this universe?

He doesn't reveal himself, as Jesus says here, because we are wise and learned. Now, who were the wise and learned whom Jesus is speaking about here?

See, Jesus is not saying, he's not speaking in some kind of inverted, exclusive way, saying that the real insiders are the people who are not so wise and not so learned, that it's actually good to be unintelligent and simple.

He's not saying that, because he has a specific class of people in mind. So, the wise and the learned were the temple officials, the high priest and his family, and the whole entourage who operated the temple in Jerusalem, who resisted Jesus Christ tooth and nail and ultimately shed his blood.

[21 : 17] Claiming to have the knowledge of God, they had none. Claiming to be the custodians of godliness, they were ungodly.

And Jesus knew that actually what they really valued was not that they knew God, because they didn't. What they really valued was their learnedness, how much ahead of everyone else they were in learning, in the learning of the scriptures even.

How far advanced they were in terms of power. They were powerful people. And how great they were in terms of the respect and esteem they had from the people.

They were so holy, they were so important in their own eyes, conceited in their own learning. And Jesus said, you'll never find out about God like that.

if you already think that your viewpoint is right, you'll never find out about God. If you already think that you see, you'll never see that you're blind.

[22 : 42] And that applies even to us when we become Christians. As soon as we think we know, as soon as we become proud of our knowledge, our learning, our spiritual attainments, our understanding of the Bible, our doctrinal grasp, then we've stopped moving.

We've stopped growing. We've stopped receiving new understanding from God. Revelation.

We've stopped being children. who look up trustingly to a father and say, Father, why is that? And what do I do here, Father?

And can you show me the way that I should behave in this situation, Father? And Father, I'm really struggling here.

Can you help me? Father, I really, really don't know how to cope with this situation. Please show me little children.

[23 : 59] Keep learning more. Little children, ask why. Why? Why? Why is that?

It's lovely to have little children about as I have at home who are always asking why. It's a dreadful thing when people stop asking why.

When the wonder goes out of their world because they think they actually know about their world. when the wonder goes out of God for the Christian, we're in real trouble.

When we stop being little children, we're in desperate trouble. When we start thinking that we are wise and learn it.

And so it is that each one of us needs to look at ourselves we need to look at ourselves because many of us have been Christians for a long time.

[25 : 10] Perhaps we're studying because we know that we're intelligent. Perhaps we're in good jobs because we know that we're capable. And we have to realize that if we think we are something in Bonacord Free Church, if we think we are something in the kingdom of God because we are something in our workplace, or because we are something in our studies, or because we are somebody according to our bank account, or the recognition we have for many people, if we think that we are something in the church of Christ because of these things, we need to repent of that tonight.

We need to deeply repent of it. We need to come to God and say, Father, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Can you show me, Father, more of yourself? Because actually, I thought I knew quite a lot, but from twenty light years away, I see that I know very, very little.

I thought that I was really just about there as a Christian. I thought that I'd found my place as a Christian, that I'd arrived, and I see, Father, that actually what I thought was my destination was a place of stagnation.

I've stopped traveling with you, Father. I've stopped walking with you. The scenery has been the same for a while, Father, because I've stopped moving, and I want to start moving with you again.

[27 : 06] I'm not entirely clear what these things are, as Jesus says in verse 21. You've hidden these things, he says, from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

If we're looking at the context, it probably refers to the way that these 72 disciples of Jesus have discovered spiritual warfare, really, have discovered that there is a spiritual battle taking place and that Christ has authority in that battle, but that there are real forces of evil.

And no doubt there's a spiritual battle even this weekend. There's a spiritual battle in your soul, and there's a spiritual battle in Bonaccord Free Church, and there's a spiritual battle in your halls of residence, or in your lecture room, or in your boardroom, or wherever it is.

There's a spiritual battle. And we must never, never, never think that because we are wise and learned, because we are clever, because we are well known, experienced, influential, of noble birth, or of great wealth, that that will have any benefit for us in this spiritual battle.

Satan laughs at wealthy men if they rely on their wealth. Satan laughs at scholars if they rely on their scholarship.

[29 : 08] Satan laughs at powerful men and women if they rely on their influence. But when a little child gets on his or her knees and prays to a very real father in heaven, Satan shakes and trembles.

And that is what these 72 have discovered. And Jesus is so happy that they've discovered it. You know, the words that Luke uses here to describe Jesus are really very powerful words.

It says Jesus was full of joy through the Holy Spirit. And the joy word is a really strong word. He was just absolutely overwhelmed with joy, delighting in the way the father was revealing himself to the little children, to those missionaries, those disciples of Jesus.

The way he was revealing himself, because they were going out in dependence on the father, and the father was showing himself to them. And they were learning the father's viewpoint on things.

They were traveling with the father as they went out around the villages. And as they traveled with the father, the spiritual scenery kept changing because they were growing. Because they were developing.

[30 : 39] Because they were walking with the father. They were discovering new places, seeing new things. And Jesus is delighted with this. Compared to the static, stagnant, stale learning and scholarship of the temple hierarchy.

He sees those peasant workers of his, who have no position in the world's terms, are far more full of the kingdom of heaven, and of the knowledge of God than all those scholars at the temple.

And he's rejoicing in it. That's what he's saying. And he says, I praise you, Father.

I think the authorised version says, I thank you, Father. I actually prefer that. the word, it's the word that gives us a word we probably don't use very often, the word homologate.

Sometimes we use that word if we say that someone has taken a certain course of action and then we're asked, do we approve of it or otherwise?

[31 : 55] And we say that we homologate what they've said or what they've done. that is we agree. We're of one voice with them. And Jesus is saying that I homologate.

I'm of one voice. I'm of one mind. I'm of one way of thinking with you, Father, about this. This is the way I see things too. And that's what we need to do as Christians.

We need to homologate the Father. We need to see things, understand things, think things according to his thinking. and his understanding.

And so tonight, as we come to the communion weekend, and we're going to be thinking about God's viewpoint more, let's pray together.

Let's say, Father, show me more of yourself. Father, open my understanding. Father, help me to really travel with you this weekend.

[33 : 01] Help me to walk with you. Help me to see new scenes with you. Help me to discover new things. Make that your prayer for the weekend. Come expectantly to the times of fellowship and of worship and of teaching.

Come really hungering to grow in your understanding. repent of any staleness. Repent of any stagnancy in your walk with God and seek to really come fresh to Him.

Repent of depending on how much you've learned already or how much you've attained already and see that it's so completely insignificant without an ongoing walk with God because everything is insignificant without God.

Seen from the other end of the universe, you're not even a speck, you're not an atom, you're nothing. but seen through the eyes of God, you're His child whom He loves and cherishes and whom He wants to see looking up to Him with all the questions and all the trust and all the prayers of your heart and whom He wants to see placing that childlike hand into His hand and allowing Him to lead us and to bring us into new things.

That's what makes us significant. That's what gives us our worth. That's what will bless us and give just glory to our souls over this weekend as we do what Jesus is delighting in here, looking up to the Father, Lord of heaven and earth.

[35 : 02] Ah, Father, I homologate what You are and what You say and what You do. I love it. I delight in it.

I want more of it. I want You, Father. I want to be that little child to whom You reveal more and more, who's not got stagnant, who's not settled down in a certain viewpoint and can't see anything new anymore, who's not become conceited and who's beyond learning, but who instead comes as a child and says, Father, lead me and teach me.

So may God bless His Word richly to us and our fellowship together. Father, let's bow for a moment in prayer now. Let's pray.

Our Father, we know that Your Word has spoken to us tonight. We know, Father, that You have showed us that we have placed too much emphasis upon what we are in ourselves, what we've attained, and not enough on looking up to what You are and to what You can show us.

And we pray, Father, that You will help us to travel with You, to walk with You into the new scenery to see the new things which You will reveal to us over this weekend.

[36 : 56] Help us to progress. We pray for Your blessing and grace on any who want to make any particular step forward in their discipleship, in their looking up to You, Father, and seeking You.

help us to do that, Father. And hear our prayers now. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing now in Psalm 105 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 105. I'm singing at the beginning of the psalm. It's on page 374.

I should say, I haven't been given any notices to give to you, but the Kirk session will be meeting immediately after the service tonight, the elders and myself, and would be very happy to meet with anyone who wants, for the first time, to profess, that you are a Christian man, a woman, a young person, and so to join the congregation, and to be able to join with the congregation at the Lord's table on Sunday morning.

We'd love to encourage you in that step. and so you can just make yourself known to one of the elders or whatever, myself, if you want to do that.

[38 : 40] He had a time to because he he