

Moved to Tears

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[0 : 0 0] Good. Well, we're going to turn to our Bible readings this morning, and as you're turning to page 879 in the Church Bible, let me welcome our guest preacher this morning. It's lovely to have Alan Purser back with us. Alan is a regular visitor, or at least has been for many years. He comes up to teach at the Cornhill Training Course, and he's always good enough to preach for us here in one of the services. Alan was, until fairly recently, working with Crosslinks, and you'll recall some of you that he's told us about his various travels around the world. He retired from that particular ministry last year, but of course, there's no such thing as retirement from the Lord's work, and he's still keeping himself very busy with all kinds of other ministries, and we're delighted that he's here with us today. So welcome, Alan. Welcome back among us. We have a short passage this morning. We're looking at Luke's Gospel, and we're going to read just a little section in chapter 19 at verse 41 to 44, where in this second part of Luke's Gospel, as Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem to enter his glory, to go to the cross and to be raised from the dead, he has just finally entered the city, what we call a triumphal entry. And then we have these rather poignant and somewhat troubling words in verse 41. When he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace. But now they're hidden for your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they'll not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation. Amen. May God bless his word to us.

Amen. Well, good morning. It's very nice to be with you. And I've had a treat already this morning because I had my first ever visit to Kelvin Grove Church. And that was great fun and marvelous to see it and begin to flourish and get established.

we, um, we're involved in just beginning to think, I say we, I, I, I recently moved to the high peaks of Derbyshire and, uh, my wife and I are living in a town called Buxton and we join in a church called Trinity Buxton. And we have just been opportunity, given the opportunity to, um, think about launching a new church, uh, a little to the north of us. And we're trying to work out how to do it. So it's a marvelous to see what progress you have made. We've been thinking about the language of, uh, building church and, uh, that language is very important. This morning, we're going to be looking at this small section in Luke 19. And I think maybe if you could turn to that, that would be a help to me. And I hope to you in our church Bibles, the page numbers, eight, seven, nine. And it's, uh, this a short passage as Jesus approaches Jerusalem, we're going to be learning from this passage about a way of thinking about an attitude, a way of looking at a city. But before we do it, I, I, I want to say something about analogies.

People speak, don't they, of church planting and of church building. And it's very interesting how powerful analogies are because an analogy shapes our thinking and it, um, gives rise to other ideas, things that flow from it. We, uh, make inferences. We draw inferences from the analogy that we're thinking. The Bible has some very fine analogies. And I think we do well to ponder them, to employ them, and to stick to them and not to muddle them up. And I, I fear that every now and again, we do muddle them up. And so, uh, we, in our thinking have been trying to get our heads around this idea of launching a new church and what the right language is to describe it. Sometimes people talk about church planting, but interestingly, the New Testament doesn't. So would you keep your finger in Luke for a minute and come forward to one of the letters of the apostle Paul? Luke, of course, was

Paul's traveling companion, uh, the former medic who now was taken up with gospel ministry. Uh, it happens, you know, every now and again. Thank you. Um, one Corinthians chapter three, and, uh, I'm going to pick up at verse five. This is page nine, five, three in our new testaments. Uh, the apostle Paul was the one who established the church at Corinth. He now writes a letter and, uh, we in our church in Buxton have been preaching through one Corinthians. So we've been very much focused on all of this. It's, it's a pretty somber letter to be honest. Um, the rebuke that Paul has to give to the Corinthians is comprehensive and multifaceted, but in this little passage, he's calling them back to how the gospel was established amongst them. And he is, uh, addressing a certain divisiveness between them.

[6 : 42] So let me pick up at verse five. You'll see why I'm doing it in a moment. Paul writes, what then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed as the Lord assigned to each.

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. Now you see the analogy he's working with. Do you see that? It's the analogy that we find on the lips of Jesus in, for example, the parable of the sower. Remember the sower goes out to sow the seed and the seed falls in different soils. The seed is the message preached. The soils represent the hearer. And as the seed, which is the gospel falls into the soil. So the preacher's job is done because it is God who gives the growth. Now that's the horticultural analogy. Are you with me? The hortic, yes, is the planting analogy. So what do we infer from that? Look at verse seven. What we infer is that neither he who plants nor he who waters, Paul describes a policies follow-up ministry as watering, neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything. And in the language in which Paul is writing this

New Testament Greek language, he says, ute, ute, nothing, nothing. That's what I am. Nothing. I'm just a servant. Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

He who plants and he who waters are one. Each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. The we there is the apostles. You, you Corinthians, you are God's field. And there's the horticultural analogy. But notice what happens now. He suddenly switches analogy. Do you see that? For he's not now dealing with that original evangelistic ministry when he turned up and preached Christ and him crucified to this great city of Corinth that did not know the truth of the gospel. Now he's writing to believers who are in the church at Corinth. So look what he does.

He says, you are God's field. Change analogy. God's building. And so he switches from the horticultural analogy to the architectural one, if you like. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation and someone else is building upon it.

[9 : 55] Here is the analogy then of building. And what you do with churches is you build churches. You can't plant a church.

You plant the seed of the gospel. It produces believers. And believers, like living stones, the apostle Peter describes them, get built into churches. But these analogies are significant. Look at what Paul infers from this analogy.

No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, he says in verse 11. And the foundation is Jesus Christ.

So end of verse 10, let each one of you take care how he builds. Paul's not saying that the builder is nothing. He thinks there's significant work in building. We need to learn to be master builders, to take care over how we build, to make sure that we build on the same foundation, which is the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, analogies matter. If I think I'm church planting, then I will simply preach and then go and sleep or play golf or something, because God will do it. Now that's the big lesson, isn't it, about evangelism.

[11 : 28] We don't, we're not able to convert anybody. And so Jesus uses the farmer analogy, doesn't he? The farmer sows the seed and then he waits. He doesn't ever dig it up to see whether it's actually going to produce a crop.

He knows that the power in the seed has the power to produce the crop. Of course, we pray that God would do that work. But church building is quite a different matter. Church building takes time and effort continually to keep building, because it's working with people, with believers. It's building believers up into church.

And Jesus is the foundation, implying, of course, that it's the cross of Jesus and his saving work that we proclaim, that it is the resurrection of Jesus that we celebrated at Easter, that gives us our hope, that it is the very example of Jesus that we model ourselves on in our thinking and our attitude.

So analogies matter. And we have been trying to get our head around this, and I'm hugely encouraged to see that you have as well. I hope, therefore, that this morning's passage is going to be one that informs our attitude as we do this great work.

The planting work of proclaiming the gospel, the building work of growing churches. So will you come back with me to Luke 19?

[13 : 06] It's right, isn't it, in these weeks after Easter, that we reflect on Jesus' mission and on what it was that moved him.

At this point of Luke's gospel, we stand right on the brink of what is called the passion narrative. Very soon, the Lord Jesus will be betrayed, arrested, and go to his death upon the cross.

Luke has a great story, doesn't he, to tell. He begins with the story of Jesus' coming, how he was born at Bethlehem, how the angels sang at his birth.

He tells of his childhood and his public ministry of words and of works. The coming of Jesus dominates the first part of Luke's gospel, right up until chapter 9.

But then we read of a whole change of tenor in the narrative. For toward the end of chapter 9, we read that Jesus set his face to go up to Jerusalem.

[14 : 26] And that he knew that what awaited him there was indeed his death. Jerusalem, of course, high up on a hill.

And as Jesus makes the journey from Galilee in the north of the country, south toward this city, you climb up to Jerusalem.

In our Bibles, it's called the triumphal entry, isn't it? It's at least the triumphal approach. We celebrate it on Palm Sunday. And as Jesus enters the city, he acts out that great prophecy from Zechariah, riding in, not on a great stallion as a Roman general would, but in humility on the back of a donkey.

The disciples and the crowds are singing the Psalms of Ascent. Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.

Do you see that in verse 38? Its significance wasn't lost on the Pharisees, those experts in the law. They turned to Jesus and addressing him as teacher, say, Rebuke your disciples.

[15 : 48] You can't have them saying that. They're speaking as if you're the Messiah king. To which Jesus responds, I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.

For Luke, he is indeed king. And he comes in great humility. And when he drew near, verse 41, And saw the city, He went over it.

I don't know whether anybody here has seen the great city of Jerusalem. It is a fairly impressive sight. And so far as we can tell, it was a very impressive sight then.

So we're bound to ask the question, well, why? Why was Jesus driven to tears? What was it that moved him so deeply?

Was it perhaps the architecture? I mean, did he feel that really the modern architecture hadn't done justice to its history and its great distinctive role in the nation?

[17 : 12] My wife and I used to live in what is known as the Docklands area of London, Canary Wharf.

I had occasion to drive down recently. We now live in the glorious countryside of the high peaks of Derbyshire. As one sort of drives down the M11, there is a certain moment when the sort of full horrors of the architectural mess that is Canary Wharf becomes apparent on the horizon.

And we rejoice that we aren't living amongst it any longer. Is that what drove Jesus to get out his handkerchief and to weep, do you think? No, you don't look persuaded.

Well, was it perhaps the lack of infrastructure? You know, the poor water supply? The problem with the electricity or whatever it was? Do you think that was...

No? Okay. What about the transport system? Do you think he was just hacked off with all the donkey jams? Or was it more serious the economic disparity within Jerusalem, the haves and the have-nots?

[18 : 23] Do you think that was what drove him to despair? You see the question we're asking, what is it about Jerusalem that drives him to tears? Perhaps it was the political oppression, living under Roman rule, being run and organized, not from within, but from a distant city that really didn't sort of care about them.

People do get upset by that, I'm told. What was it that drove Jesus to tears?

Well, it's an important question, isn't it? Have you ever noticed what it was? Have a look with me. Look down at verse 42. Because he makes it very clear. When he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, here then are the words of Jesus, looking over this city.

Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace.

What is it that drives him to tears? It is the ignorance of the inhabitants of the city. Would that you, even you, had known the things that make for peace.

[19 : 50] By ignorance, we don't mean to suggest that they were unintelligent. We don't mean to suggest that they couldn't think properly.

But what he laments is that despite all of their teaching and training and intelligence and ability, they didn't know the one thing that matters above all others.

Would that you had known on this day the things that make for peace. I wonder how you feel as you look around your great city of Glasgow.

how do you feel as you notice people heading in all directions? What will you be feeling tomorrow morning as you head off to work or back to college or to the school gate or wherever you find yourself?

for Jesus, what drove him to tears was their ignorance of the things that make for peace.

[21 : 01] Now, had you been reading Luke's gospel through from the beginning, you would be aware of how important peace is. For right at the beginning of Luke's gospel, we understand that the coming of the Messiah King is going to bring peace.

Keep your finger here. Just come back with me for a minute. Let me just pick out some. I think these will all be very familiar verses to you. Come back to Luke chapter 1.

You remember John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, and his great song. He speaks in verse 76 of John the Baptist being called the prophet of the Most High who will go before the Lord to prepare his ways to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins.

because of the tender mercy of our God whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of say it with me peace.

You see it? It's right there at the beginning. And so as Mary's child is born the angels sing 2.14 glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is well pleased.

[22 : 48] The aged Simeon who takes the infant Christ child in his arms in the temple. Do you remember what he says? Lord now you let your servant depart in peace.

And as Jesus embarks on his public ministry time and again the blessing he gives is the blessing of peace. Do you remember the woman who wept over Jesus' feet and washed them with her tears because we're told her sins were many and she finds mercy and forgiveness from Jesus is sent away in peace.

That other woman who had been the victim of medical malpractice for as long as 12 years who just touched his cloak in the crowd as he went to heal Jairus' daughter.

Immediately she was made well. Do you remember? Jesus says your faith has made you well. Go in peace. And Jesus' disciples were commissioned to go to houses and to say peace be to this house.

This is peace not in the sense of absence of conflict. It's not peace in the sense merely of the cessation of war.

[24 : 21] Glad we prayed for Syria in those terms this morning. But this is peace not between man and man but between people and God.

This is the peace that Christ alone can give. It's the peace that came to a remarkable character at the beginning of Luke 19. For as Jesus enters Jericho you remember he encounters this very wealthy tax collector Zacchaeus.

and Zacchaeus marvelously repents and believes and Jesus says salvation has come to this house.

Zacchaeus finds peace with God. The tragedy of Jerusalem was that unlike Zacchaeus it didn't recognize the one who was visiting it.

Would that you even you had known on this day the things that make for peace but now they are hidden from your eyes for the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side.

[25 : 34] it's as if Jesus looks into the future and laments not only that they failed to recognize the opportunity they had when he came to them but he sees now that it is almost too late for a terrible prospect of judgment and destruction awaits them.

look what he says verse 44 they will tear you down to the ground you and your children within you that will not leave one stone upon another because you did not know the time of your visitation.

Luke is writing these things in the early 60s AD some 30 years after the great events that he's describing.

Within less than a decade these words were fulfilled as the general Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in AD 70.

And Jesus sees into the future the prospect of that terrible judgment. He understands the cause of it is because they have rebelled against God and rejected God's one and only son and it moves him to tears.

[27 : 08] Friends how do you think of them of your city? What will you think tomorrow morning when you find yourselves in a traffic jam? What will you think as you see the hordes of able and organized people heading off around the beginning of their weekly business?

How do you look at your city? Jesus drew near and saw the city and wept over it. Have you ever been moved to tears like that?

I think this passage has profound implications for how we engage in our gospel planting and our church building activities.

I've got three suggestions for you. It may be that you will have others. Think with me if you will about these three at least before we finish this morning.

here's the first one. What we are shown here is that God has feelings too. God has feelings too.

[28 : 26] You have feelings, you're used to feeling emotions. How do you think God feels? I know that very often we speak, don't we, of God as high and mighty, lofty and lifted up, above all, he is the king, he is the creator king and the ruler of the universe.

If we could but see into heaven, we would see, as John saw, that heaven is dominated by a throne and the throne isn't empty. For one sits on it who is the ancient of days, the Lord almighty, the great I am, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, the God who revealed himself to Moses.

Yes, he is there and he rules. And yet, all of that can teach us to think of God as other, as being distant, as being somehow above us.

And those things are true, but he became one of us in Jesus, the word made flesh. and here we have revealed clearly to us, as a window into the heart and mind of our saviour, that God has feelings too.

His lament was accompanied by tears. Tears for the city because of his love and concern for the people.

[30 : 03] Tears of lament, because of their ignorance of the things that really matter, would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace.

Incidentally, that is a great way to speak to friends who are not yet believers. To ask them, my friend, do you know the things that make for peace?

Are you at peace with God? It's a good way to kick off a conversation. Perhaps there are some here this morning who know in their own hearts and minds that actually you don't yet know peace with God.

The marvellous blessing of the gospel, the reason the Lord Jesus came into this world, God, the reason he died upon the cross for our sins and rose again on the third day, was that each and every one of us, whatever our background, our language, our culture, whatever our upbringing, whatever our age, whatever our agenda, whatever baggage we carry, may by God's grace know his peace, the peace of sins forgiven, the peace that renders death as but sleep, the peace that tells us that we are a beloved child, the peace that enables us to hold our head up high and to walk before him.

If you don't know that peace, well please don't rest until you do, but please understand that that peace is the very blessing of the gospel for you.

[32 : 05] But Jesus lamented that the mass of people in Jerusalem were ignorant of the things that make for peace and headed for destruction and he felt that deeply.

God has feelings too. That's my first big lesson from this passage. Here's the second one. God doesn't delight in judgment.

He delights in salvation. It was a cause of grief to Jesus that these people were headed for destruction. He longed for them to understand, to open their eyes, to see, to grasp their opportunity before it was too late.

The Bible is full, isn't it, of emphasizing this great truth. Yes, we are told that God is the God of judgment, that he will one day condemn sin.

And yet we are told that God is a God of love, that God in the words of Ezekiel doesn't desire the death of a sinner, but rather he should turn from his wickedness and live.

[33 : 26] took Jonah a while, didn't it, to grasp that, do you remember? Took Jonah a while to come to terms with the fact that God actually meant what he said.

Jonah wasn't all that thrilled, was he, when the people of Nineveh repented. Jonah is not an example to us of godliness.

we're not to imitate Jonah, but we are to imitate Jesus. You know godliness is to do with being like God.

So we need to be like God, to rejoice in salvation, not in judgment, to feel as God feels. When was the last time you were grieved and moved to tears peace, by the fact that this great city in which you live, where you are building church, is full of people who do not know the things that make for peace.

And thirdly and lastly, you notice how this sharpens the focus of Jesus' mission. It's a big theme of this chapter.

[34 : 48] At the end of the incident with Zacchaeus, after Jesus rejoices that salvation has come to this most unlikely of people's houses in Jericho, we get a marvelous little summary of why it was that Jesus came into the world.

Look at verse 10 of chapter 19. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

I'm not at all sure that had you and I been in Jericho back there then we would have imagined that Zacchaeus was all that lost. He was healthy and wealthy and seemed to have everything sorted.

But Jesus saw him as a lost man. And now as he looks over Jerusalem, he sees a city of lost people.

and he is moved to tears. Before long he will be betrayed, arrested and crucified.

[36 : 01] And it is the risen Jesus who then at the end of Luke's gospel commissions his disciples to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all peoples beginning from Jerusalem.

Isn't that marvellous? Beginning from the very city that Jesus wept over. Here then is the motive and the ambition for our gospel planting and our church building.

It is to proclaim the possibility of the forgiveness of sins to make available that peace which the world cannot give.

To be men and women who speak and who pray to that end. But please also men and women who like Christ are moved to tears about the things that really matter.

The things that make for peace. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. God, you know our hearts and our minds this morning.

[37 : 43] We ask forgiveness forgiveness when we have failed to be godly in the way we think about those around us.

As we are stuck in a traffic jam, as we see the hordes of commuters, the great numbers heading on their way to work or to study, give us, we pray, the eyes to see this great city as on that day you wept over Jerusalem.

We thank you from the bottom of our heart, our Lord Jesus Christ, that you went to the cross, that we may know peace with God. Grant a good understanding of those things for each one of us, we pray.

Give us trust and confidence in your saving work, that we, though we were lost, can know that now we are found and rejoice in that peace which you alone can give.

And then we ask that we may be those who are gospel planters and church builders. So build your church amongst us, we pray, for your great praise and glory, amen.

[39 : 12] Amen. Amen.