

Cornhill Scotland 20th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service

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Date: 27 September 2026

Preacher: Craig Dyer

[0:00] Well, good evening, everybody, and welcome. Welcome to our service here at the Tron Church,¹ and welcome particularly to this special occasion in which we are giving thanks to God! for 20 years of the Cornhill Training Course here in Scotland. This is a special weekend of celebration.

Yesterday, we had many students from the past and staff from the past coming back to join us as we celebrated our thanks to God for these things. But tonight is an opportunity for all of us. Many churches in Scotland, particularly those in the beginning near here, but now all over Scotland, have been partners in the work of Cornhill, training people for Bible teaching ministries of the future, and it's lovely for us to have an opportunity this evening together to thank God for these things.

We're going to hear from various different folk who've been involved with Cornhill and hopefully give you a flavor of that. But our great focus tonight, above all, is to give thanks to God. Let me begin then by reading some words from the Apostle Paul.

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Well, let's begin by doing that together as we sing.

[1 : 36] Now, thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices. may may may may may
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With hearts and hearts
and voices Such wonders he has come In him will rejoice in Through all our other tribes

And bless us on our way With countless dreams of God And still in time to reign So in his ever's
home Through all our life He is here To heal our hearts and hope And bring his peace to Jesus
Through the hearts and his dreams Through may may may may may

Thank you.

Thank you.

[illegible]

What could we do? I tell you what we'll do, said one of them. We'll set up a trust so that other people can be encouraged to develop this sort of Bible teaching ministry across the country and indeed around the world.

[11:07] And that's what they did. They set up the Proclamation Trust in 1986. And it had a number of conferences helping ministers to preach the word.

You see, those of you who remember the 1980s may recall that there was a sort of tidal wave sweeping over the evangelical churches in the UK which was questioning the centrality of biblical preaching.

Some people were saying, well, what we need now is the new word of God in contemporary prophecy. We don't need all this Bible study. And so the content of what was being done was under threat.

And other people were saying, well, the methodology is out of date. In our schools now, we have everything in group learning and we should just have groups that share together.

We don't need all this proclamation going on. But some of us knew that that was not biblical. That was not God's way. His primary way was the proclaiming of the word.

[12:06] And so in 1986 with these various conferences getting underway, ministers who were helped by them began to say, well, it would be great if we'd had this earlier in our time.

And wouldn't it be wonderful if our young men could come to some sort of longer training for preparation for biblical ministry. ministry. And so in 1991, when I was the minister of a Bubba church in Southampton, Dick Lucas came down one day and said to me, are you going to spend the rest of your life in Southampton?

And I said, well, tell me about it. And he said, well, we'd like to set up a course in London under the Proclamation Trust with which I'd already been involved as a one-year Bible handling, Bible training course for biblical preaching and teaching.

I had been praying for three years that God would show me how I could do that in Southampton. And it didn't work out in Southampton, but in the providence of God, it worked out in London. And so God gave us St. Peter's Church on Cornhill, which is why the course has that name, Cornhill Training Course.

And we began in 1991, 35 years ago this month, with 15 students and the opportunity of spending a year together four days in the week in the class and the other two days with a day off, of course, but the other two days in their church placements.

[13:34] And very quickly as the course developed, people started to say, well, can't we do two days a week and then another two days a week a second year? So although we started with a one-year course, it quickly became a two-year course and people were able to come to us Monday and Tuesday.

Wednesday was a study day. Thursday and Friday was the second year cohort. And they were all in practical ministry placements in all sorts of churches around the London area.

And so that was why we began Cornhill, to try under God to raise up a new generation of Bible teachers and preachers who would rightly handle God's word of truth.

So Cornhill began with lots of practice at doing that, working through books of the Bible, working on how to interpret the Bible, how to read it properly, how it fits into the whole meta-narrative of the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, lots of Bible study, but also lots of practice.

So preaching classes every week where people produce talks, sometimes five, ten minutes, by the end of the course twenty minutes, and ways in which we were able or tried to be able to help them.

[14:48] So loving criticism of what was done, which was in order to help them to improve and to develop their ability to speak the word, because it's not just understanding it, getting it right, but getting it across to the congregation.

And everybody will do that in their own way. There's no sort of one way of doing it. There's no imposition of you must do it this way, but if we're going to be good handlers of the word of truth, then God will work through us.

Someone has said preaching is truth through personality. All the personalities will be different, but the truth is the same. So let's work on the truth, and then everyone will express it according to their personalities, their God-given gifts, and so on.

And in the goodness of God, that's been going on now for thirty-five years and still continues.

People from all around the world have come to us. And then twenty years ago, as Willie, came back

[16:13] because we always need more gospel laborers. Somebody said to me just yesterday, there are so many opportunities, but where are the workers? And the Lord Jesus said, pray the Lord of the harvest that he'll thrust out workers into the harvest field.

So I'm so thrilled that God has blessed us with Cornhill Scotland in these twenty years and it's in such good shape. There's the pastor's training course as well, of course, which is closely connected to it.

Thank you, David, so much. And it's great to hear of these things beginning and still going on. Before John Gemmell, the current director of the Cornhill Training Coast, comes to read the scriptures to us, we're going to sing once again.

But we're going to sing, Thank you, Lord, for gifts of teaching so that we might understand all your word and its far-reaching truth for life, for head and heart and hand.

Amen. Amen.

[20:20] Amen. Amen. Amen. Please turn with me to Colossians chapter 1.

Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you as indeed in the whole world. It is bearing fruit and increasing as it also does among you since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant.

[22:01] So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to

his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things. And in him, all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church.

He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might have preeminence. For in him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

[23 : 29] And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds. He is now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven.

And of which I, Paul, became a minister. Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. And in my flesh, I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body.

That is the church of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you to make the word of God fully known.

The mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

[24 : 40] Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy, that he powerfully works within me.

This is the perfect word of our gracious God. We're now going to watch a short video with reflections from Cornhillers from down through the ages.

So sit back and watch this together. When I came to this country five years ago, I realised that I don't really know the Bible.

I came to Cornhill initially because I wanted to have a better handle on preaching and teaching the Bible. Although I'd gone through formal training for ministry, I felt a genuine need to know the Bible better.

I wanted to make sure that what people were telling me was the truth. I was doing a ministry training ship in St. Andrews. The director once told me, if I came, it would make me more dangerous for atheists.

[25 : 45] I wanted to be trained for ministry and learning to teach the Bible was the most important bit of that. I love the way that Cornhill approached the Bible as our ultimate authority. I was sent by my organisation, Delhi Bible Institute, to get trained to come back and teach our students and preach in our church.

I also knew that whatever I did at Cornhill, it would be useful in helping me to be a better equipped church member. Cornhill has been very helpful to me in terms of building my confidence in handling the Bible.

I have loads of material to just kind of take and adapt and use. The confidence I was given to know that God's Word does God's work among His people. For me, Cornhill really provided the perfect toolkit for church ministry as a layperson.

Getting a real grasp of God's Word, going much, much deeper than I'd ever been before. I remember on day one, John Gamble just told us that the Old Testament is about Jesus Christ, and I was almost in tears because I never knew that.

Understanding more about the Old Testament and how it really adds a layer to the New Testament. It helped me to see the big picture of the Bible. It helped to give me confidence in knowing how to teach the Bible to other people. Say what the text says in the way that the text says it, for the purpose for which the text says it.

[27 : 01] The card of maraudery in the class and the friendships that you get to make, it's absolutely fantastic. We're making friendships with other people in the ministry that have kept me

going and kept me going forward for years. It's deepened my knowledge of the scriptures, how to work in them, how to apply them, how to interpret them.

Helping me come to some pastoral convictions about what faithful ministry is all about. We can really know God truly by reading the Bible, and I'm eager to teach more people to do that. I'm no longer afraid to pick up the likes of Jeremiah or something mental on Ezekiel or something. Knowing that it's teachable is going to be helpful for God's people. To handle God's truth in a way in which it would be engaging and captivating for folks to hear about.

For all the learning that we did, there was an almost equal amount of laughing. As we take God's word seriously, we don't have to take ourselves too seriously. In the five years that I've been a Christian, I feel like I've been on a booster crash course that has been so beneficial for my learning and understanding of the Lord Jesus.

I am a bi-vocational church worker, so I work at Hope City Church, Edinburgh, and I'm also a doctor working in Malovians. I'm the assistant minister at St Peter's Free Church in Dundee.

[28:16] Now I am a ministry trainee at Woodhill Evangelical Church, training for full-time pastoral ministry on the pastor's training course. I now live in Melbourne, Australia, and I'm an English teacher, but I still use what I learned at Cornhill every day, whether it's through reading my Bible personally, reading the Bible with other women at church, or teaching the Bible to kids and youth.

We've just moved to the West Coast, where Callum is about to start working for Eucharist Whit Baptist Church as the pastor. I work here at Cornerstone Community Church in Stirling, where I lead the youth ministry team.

I now serve as the minister of Grace Church Montrose. I'm currently a pastor in training at Charlotte Chapel, working at Bones Baptist. I'm a pastor in training at a church in Glasgow called Yoker Evangelical Church.

Now I'm moving on to become a staff worker with Friends International. Currently the acting pastor at Gourke Baptist Community Church, which is a church for vitalisation, done and unverplayed. I'm currently with the C.S. Lewis Institute, establishing a branch in Edinburgh and running a discipleship programme.

Now I work for Greenview Church in South Centre Plasby as an outreach and women's worker. As it happens now, 17 years later, I'm actually training for full-time ministry, and I believe that Cornhill at the time laid the groundwork for that.

[29:31] I am the minister of Congregational Church in deepest, darkest, Eucharist. I'm now serving as the ministry associate for pastoral care and women's discipleship over at Cornerstone Community Church.

I'm currently at Gilcomson Church in Aberdeen. Now I am working as a family's minister for a church outside of Belfast. I returned and am continuing to teach and preach what we learned from Cornhill.

We are using the same syllabus to teach our students here in India. I would encourage anyone who's thinking about local church ministry or mission in any capacity to start by thinking about the Cornhill training course.

You're going to get the best training that's possible in Scotland from the best people. Praise God for another 20 years, perhaps, to come. Well, with all that fresh in our minds, Peter Dixon, who's been involved in Cornhill since the very beginning, is one of the trustees, is going to come and pray and give thanks for, particularly for the Cornhill staff and the team and all that's been done in these past years.

Peter. And we're going to ask the Cornhill team to come and stand up at the front, teachers, administrators, etc., past and present, so that people can see the faces of the current team, trustees.

[30:51] Anyone else who's here? Anyone who wants a job? Great. Well, the students' voices were a great testimony, but so is the work of these folks as well.

So as we give thanks, let's all pray together. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you tonight that our way back in 1961, when that ministry began in St. Helens Church, Bishopsgate, that you foresaw today and the fruitfulness that would flow from those early beginnings.

And we thank you tonight for the long influence and model of London's Proclamation Trust, and especially for the friendship and encouragement of Dick Lucas and David Jackman, and many others who worked hard in London to establish this kind of training for ministry.

heaven.

And then these key words, of this you have heard before, in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you. Of this you have heard.

So a life-changing message had been proclaimed to these believers in the churches of the Lycus Valley. And they had been given grace to receive that message of the gospel.

[44:09] And now they had faith in the Lord Jesus. Now they had hope beyond whatever this life held for them, good or bad. And they had love for each other.

And then at the end of chapter 1, Paul enlarges on the miracle that had happened as the gospel had come. Verse 21, You who were alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order—and notice here how He begins to look to a future day—in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting.

From the hope of the gospel that you heard. It is a thrilling summary of the impact of the historic gospel as it comes by the proclaimed word, isn't it?

But that's a big if in verse 23. Paul is now focusing not on what they'd heard in the past, not even on the impact the gospel had made, but he's now telling them how this connects in preparing them for that coming day, the final judgment when the Lord Jesus returns.

And his message is that if we have turned to Christ for salvation, and if we, as we've just been praying, if we stick to the gospel, if we stay with the life-saving truth of the Lord Jesus that we have heard, then no matter what happens to us in life, no matter what life holds for us, we can live with total confidence that we will be presented one day without fear of reproach to God on the last day.

[46:01] That is a very thrilling thing. But it all depends on that big if—if you remain. If you continue in the faith.

If you don't shift. If you remain anchored by the word of God. I think of the need for this anchorage. I guess most organizations have vision statements about where they're going, how they're moving, how much ground they've covered and are going to cover. And we've been rejoicing in that as we've celebrated 20 years of Cornhill this weekend.

But Cornhill, Scotland and gospel churches treasure the opposite value, the value of not going places, the value of not being moved.

We are very perverse. We make progress by not shifting. And the flow of verse 21 to 23 shows us how practical and how glorious and how joyful the outcome of being anchored in the word of God is.

[47:07] It means, as I've tried to outline, that nothing can rob us of the calm certainty that it will be well for us, in spite of us, when we see the Lord Jesus, if we continue in the faith stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.

So this anchorage is essential because having begun by hearing and responding to the gospel, we are kept safe in all the vagaries of life by continuing to hear and respond to the gospel in all the scriptures.

And of course, when we talk about the gospel, we don't just mean the punchlines like John 3.16. That certainly is the gospel, but we mean the whole revelation of God, the whole truth of Jesus is Lord.

But we're not to take this anchorage for granted. Paul later says in verse 28, Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching with all wisdom. And here's an example of that warning ministry of the apostle Paul as he proclaims Christ.

He puts it negatively in verse 23. He doesn't just tell us what to do, he tells us what not to do. He says, don't shift from the hope of the gospel that you heard.

[48:30] I wonder if any of you men were ever in the BB, in the boys' brigade, and perhaps you'll remember the lines from the famous anthem that go like this, when the strong tides lift and the cables strain, will your anchor drift or firm remain?

And actually, these are questions not just for boys in the BB, these are questions for churches and church leaders and seminary leaders across the world throughout history. And we need this anchor, don't we?

We need this anchorage in the Word of God because there were strong tides threatening the security and the stability of all the New Testament churches. That's why the letters were written. And still among the churches today, there are strong tides.

David talked about the 1980s. I was just in my teens, coming into my 20s and the 80s. And I lived through the chaos of the 1980s that he described, strong tides, taking us away from the gospel. And as we celebrate this weekend and look back with great joy and look forward with great joy and optimism, it's sad to see that there is a parallel story. We're surrounded, aren't we, by the evidence all down through history, but across these 20 years, I think particularly in Scotland, that churches which and individuals who were originally founded on the gospel have shifted from it because they were not careful to be anchored by it.

[50:03] They just took it for granted that that would happen. I'm so thankful to the Lord for Cornhill, Scotland, because here we're all about understanding the indispensability of that anchorage without which we will shift.

The need for this anchorage, and just a word on the nature of this anchorage, why do people and churches shift from the gospel? Why does that happen? Well, it's pretty obvious, really, isn't it? Because being anchored to God's Word means protection, but inevitably, when you're anchored, it also means restriction. It means that the Word of God always comes to us and cuts across what we think is best.

And even in Colossians, when you get to chapter 4, we come to what is considered to be reckless and offensive nowadays, as Paul outlines the relationships within marriage, as he talks to wives and he talks to husbands.

And even in this letter, and even in this day, that's where the strong tides lift and the cables strain. And we all know church leaders whose instinct, when they come to these verses, is to weigh anchor, to say, oh, that's too dodgy for this day and age.

[51:28] Cornhill, Scotland, stands for being anchored in the Word of God. But, just saying that won't make it happen. We actually, at Hamilton Baptist, and it reminds me to say that I bring the very warm greetings of HBC to the Tron Church and to all involved in Cornhill this evening.

We pray for the work here regularly, and the folks are praying for us tonight. But we have actually taken Colossians 1, and these three headings, I've applied them differently there, but we've taken them as our mission statement.

And one of the things I said as we did that in this last year is that it's all right to say we should be a church anchored by the Word of God, but saying it doesn't make it happen.

And as we kind of laid that out as a mission statement, I did say to the church family, well, time will tell. We'll see the extent to which we are personally and corporately as a church family anchored to God's Word.

Because God's Word not only protects our hope and directs our paths, it also restricts our moves. Because this is the Word of the Sovereign Lord.

[52:42] This is the Word of the One who is the head of all rule and authority for us. And for some, when they feel the anchor chafing, they want to shift.

Cornhill, Scotland, stands for the anchor, for being anchored by the Word of God. Secondly, it stands for being aligned to the will of God. I love the way Paul links his preaching to them and his praying for them.

The two great aspects of prayer and the ministry of the Word that always go together or ought always to go together. So back to verse 9 just for a moment.

So Paul says, From the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

I love the way he links his proclamation ministry and his prayerful ministry for them. And then do you see the link between God's will and our walk, as it were, our way of living?

[54:04] Paul prays for his readers to know God's will so that they can walk God's way. Or to put it another way, he prays that they will increasingly grow to know God so that they can increasingly live to please God.

If you can remember back to your days in the YF, in which if you were saved at that time and grew up in a gospel church, what were the things that we always wanted teaching on?

I think it was always relationships, that was always a hot favorite, and the will of God. And I think it's a lovely thing, particularly among younger people, when they have a concern to know, what is God's will for my life?

And it tends to come down to the particular issues they're facing at that point. But whatever stage we're at in life, we all want to know how to tackle a difficult situation, what's God's will in this situation.

Or whether to marry, or whether to move job, or whether to retrain, or whether to fix the mortgage, or whether to fix the boiler, or whether to undergo surgery, or whatever it may be.

[55:08] And of course, it's lovely, isn't it? Because our gracious God and Heavenly Father He has purposes for us in all the microscopic details of our lives, and He is interested in all these details of our lives.

But He's not primarily committed to allowing us to page Him as the oracle. What we tend to want is that. What we tend to want is the Lord to give us specific answers to all the questions we have.

What's your will, Lord? Just tell me, and I'll go and do it. But as the years have gone by in my own life, and as I've looked at the reaction of my own heart, I think, if the Lord had done that for me, I would have come to Him, got the answer I needed, and then I would have gone away again and done the thing without Him.

I would have headed off and cracked on with life without Him, really, as my Lord and Savior. So the Lord set up the universe in such a way that all spiritual wisdom and understanding is there for us and is to be found, but it's to be found not in us downloading specific answers to the questions we have, but it's to be found in our knowledge of Him.

And knowing God's will doesn't primarily mean that to my satisfaction I know everything that's going to happen, and I know how to handle it when it does. Rather, it means that I have what I need so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

[56:49] And there are some, aren't there, who may say that being anchored by His Word is to tie us hopelessly to an ancient truth that makes it impossible for us to know how to cope with the challenges of modernity.

Fine for a foundation, but useless for the issues of modern life. But it's the complete opposite. I don't know where you are in the AI debate.

No doubt AI has great usefulness along with the terrors that it's striking globally at the moment. But here is, and this is very corny, but here is UI, here is ultimate intelligence.

Look what Paul prays for them. All the wisdom of the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. For all the complexities of your life.

Brothers and sisters, they are to be found in being filled with the knowledge of His will. Everything in us tells us, no, that wisdom is to be found in knowing precisely what to do in my situation.

[58:01] The Lord says, no, it's not. That wisdom is to be found in knowing me and being filled with the knowledge of my will. And the access point to all that remarkable knowledge is not, as we persuade the Lord, to become aligned to our ways, but it is in us proclaiming the Lord so as to be aligned to His will by ever-increasing knowledge of Him.

And it keeps us safe, doesn't it? So often in my daily Bible readings in the morning or as I sit under ministry or as I prepare to preach to others, there's that conflict between the way I see things and the way God sees things.

And then, after the initial battle, there's that lovely sense of, there's real safety for me in moving under the authority of His Word, in aligning myself with His will.

So, Cornhill, Scotland, and its training in expository Bible ministry opens a way in the 21st century with all its complexity for people of every age and in every circumstances to be able to access all the prudence and all the shrewdness and all the insight and all the foresight and all the calculation and the necessary caution and all the confidence that you and I need to live without regret with fruitful joy for God's glory as we're aligned to His Word by our ever-increasing knowledge of Him.

What a gift to the culture that is. Cornhill, Scotland stands for being anchored by the Word of God, aligned to the will of God, and finally active in the work of God, very briefly.

[60:06] And this has been like Blackpool Rock. This has run through Cornhill from the very beginning. Paul summarizes his life's work in a remarkably comprehensive and thrilling way.

In verse 25, he speaks of the stewardship from God that was given to me for you. It's a beautiful picture there, isn't it?

It wasn't given to Paul to build him up. It wasn't given to Paul to have everybody in awe of him. It was given to Paul for them. And that's always true in gospel ministry with God's gifts.

And that's the Word and the work to which the Lord Jesus risen and ascended in His Father's right hand tonight in our time. That's the thing that He is committed to by His Spirit through His church today, making the Word of God fully known to all of the world.

And we see where Paul got that, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. So there is the graft and there is the goal. The graft is the hard work, the exhausting work, the commitment in getting the Word of God open and working on it and getting it clear and staying anchored to all its beauty and its contours and the emphasis and all of these things that we've spoken about this evening and over 20 years.

But the very opposite, mature, steadfast, stable churches. And there is a scarcity of them still in Scotland.

[62:43] And that's why I'm sure I'm not the only one who is grateful for and excited by and supportive of the work of Cornhill, Scotland.

Thank You for that wonderful rediscovery of the power of Your Word in every generation. And we do not take it for granted that we will be anchored tomorrow, so we humbly ask You for Your grace to prevail in our lives.

And we pray that we, as we think of these things tonight, may be able to say with Paul, for this we toil, struggling with all his energy, that he powerfully works within us for the glory of our Savior, the Lord Jesus, we pray.

[illegible]

Some words from Psalm 115. Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory.

[67:00] We thank you for your many kindnesses towards us. And thank you that we can present our requests to you. We're so grateful for the mercy that you've shown to us as individuals, for your kindness towards the churches represented here this evening, for the many believers and churches

