

The Landscape of the Christian Life

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: 16 February 2020

Preacher: Edward Lobb

[0 : 00] Well, do take up your Bibles, and we're going to read together a portion of Psalm 119. That is page 513, if you have one of the Vistas Bibles.

Otherwise, it's about the middle of the Bible, and about halfway through the book of Psalms. Psalm 119, the longest psalm. And it's a great piece of artistry, this psalm.

Every section you'll see has that rather strange heading, which is one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. So we're reading the portion beginning, het.

And each section not only begins with the same letter of the alphabet, but each line of these whole sections begins with that letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

So if you ever tried writing verses in rhyme, it's quite hard. And doing that sort of thing is really very hard. So somebody's put a lot of time and effort into constructing the way this psalm is written, and almost certainly to help people to memorize it.

[1 : 11] And the reason they want to memorize it is because its message must be very important, mustn't it? So we're going to read just one section, and then Edward is going to help us understand just why the message is so, so important.

So we're going to read from verse 57. The Lord is my portion. I promise to keep your words.

And treat your favor with all my heart. Be gracious to me according to your promise. When I think of my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies.

I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. The cords of the wicked ensnare me. I do not forget your law.

Midnight I rise to praise you because of your righteous rules. I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.

[2 : 15] The earth, O Lord, is full of your steadfast love. Teach me your statutes. Amen.

And may God bless us. His word. Well, pilgrims, let's open our Bibles at Psalm 119, and you'll find our section, verses 57 to 64, on page 513.

Now, you may remember, it was several months ago, but I was working my way gradually through this long, wonderful psalm, and we got as far as verse 56. And my plan, God willing, is to keep at it, and hopefully to finish it eventually, but just for the moment, I've got six Sunday evenings, and I'm hoping we can cover the next six sections.

That is verse 57 to verse 104. Now, at one level, at one level, this psalm does not tell a story.

There's no narrative in it.

It's impossible to trace any real line of development from one section to the next. But at another level, it is a narrative. It's the narrative of the unnamed writer's life.

[3 : 33] It's the autobiography of his inner life. If you look at any section of it, you'll see that the pronouns I and me, and the adjective my, come in almost every verse.

It is all about the writer. It's deeply personal. He opens up for us a wide window onto the inner workings of his heart. So we feel his joys and his sorrows, his fears, his struggles, and his delights. But it's not just about him. It's also about the Lord. The whole psalm is a prayer which is addressed to the Lord. And if again you run your eye over any section of it, you'll see the words you and your in almost every line.

So it's about I and me, and it's about you and your. Just look at the first three verses of our section, starting at verse 57. The Lord is my portion.

I promise to keep your words. I entreat your favor with all my heart. Be gracious to me according to your promise. When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies.

[4 : 48] Do you see it? It's all about the psalmist, and it's all about the Lord. In other words, it's about a relationship. This relationship between the needy believer and his trustworthy creator.

And for that reason, it has a great deal to teach us about how to relate to the Lord. After all, Christianity is not a philosophy. It's not a set of rules. It is at heart a relationship of love and trust and joy and obedience.

And Psalm 119 is one of the great Bible texts that teach us how to build up and develop that relationship between the needy believer, that's you and me, and our trustworthy creator, who has given us eternal access to him through the intervention of our Savior Jesus.

Always remember this. It's because of the intervention of Jesus that we're able to know God and relate to him. So let me introduce our passage for tonight by saying that it opens up to us the landscape of the Christian life.

That's my title for tonight, the landscape of the Christian life. It's a landscape which is made up of four major elements. First of all, the Lord and his words.

[6 : 03] And you can't really separate the Lord from his words. His words express his very heart and soul, all that he is. So that's the first element, the Lord and his words. Secondly, the psalmist.

Third, the wicked. See verse 61, and you'll see them mentioned. And then fourth, the psalmist's friends, and you'll see them mentioned in verse 63.

I'm a companion of all who fear you. Now, if you're a Christian, isn't that really the landscape of your life? These four great elements.

The Lord and his words, yourself, the Lord's opponents, that is the godless world, and your Christian friends, that is the church.

So the question is, how do these verses help us to navigate this landscape? How do they help us to journey through it well? Well, we'll take it in four sections with two verses for each section.

[6 : 59] First of all, then, from verses 57 and 58, God's grace helps us to obey him. Obedience is right at the heart of this relationship.

God's grace helps us to obey him. Now, the word obey is not used as such in verse 57, but the idea of obedience is clearly stated in the second half of the verse, where the psalmist says, I promise to keep your words.

That is a promise of obedience. I promise to do your commandments, to follow your teaching.

That's what he means. Now, if you're somebody with an ounce of self-knowledge, you'll be saying to yourself, but who can promise to keep God's words?

Are we not all sinners full of moral weakness? Is any frail human being in a position to say to the Lord, I promise to keep your words? Well, let's not imagine that the psalmist thinks of himself as a spiritual or moral hero.

If you'll turn over to the very last verse of the psalm, a couple of pages on, verse 176. Just look how he rounds up the psalm.

[8 : 09] He looks back on his life in verse 176, and he says, I have gone astray like a lost sheep. He's holding up his hands there and confessing his weakness, his tendency to wander from the fold, to go astray.

So he's not saying, I'm a wonderful, upstanding specimen of humanity who never puts a foot wrong. Not at all. He knows his weakness all too well. And yet he says, I promise to keep your words.

Now, how can he say that? Well, the next verse, verse 58, helps us to understand his promise.

Look at 58. I entreat your favor with all my heart.

Be gracious to me according to your promise. According to your promise. So in order to keep his promise, the psalmist is relying on God's promise.

I promise, verse 57, to keep your words. Be gracious to me according to your promise. Now, which of those two promises predates the other?

[9 : 13] Well, it's the Lord's promise that must come first. The psalmist's promise is a response to the Lord's prior promise. It's because the Lord has promised favor and grace that the psalmist can respond with his promise to obey.

Now, this is what it's like in every generation. The Lord has promised us grace and favor, much of it. If we're Christians, we have so much. We have his Holy Spirit, his very self, living within us, changing us.

It's the Holy Spirit who takes the words that he himself has inspired, the words of the Bible, and he teaches us their meaning and he writes them into our hearts and consciences.

The Lord changes us. As we read in Psalm 23, he restores our souls. That's what he's in the business of doing, remaking us from within, enabling us to walk in paths of righteousness for his

name's sake.

Now, before we become Christians, we don't really want to keep God's words. The idea of saying to God, I promise to keep your words, would strike us as peculiar and ludicrous if we were not Christians.

[10:23] But once we've turned to Christ, although the enticements of sin continue to beckon to us, we find that we want to obey more. Over time, the very heart and core of us gets worked on and worked over by the Lord.

Do you remember what Paul the Apostle says to his Christian readers in Romans chapter 12? He's talking about the way in which their lives are shaped. He says, do not be conformed or shaped to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

That's what it means to be a Christian and to grow as a Christian, to have our minds increasingly renewed and reshaped. Now, if you're a very new Christian, you may wonder if your mind really is going to be reshaped.

Well, let me assure you, it is what happens. It really does. And eventually, we find ourselves wanting more and more to keep God's words. So in our psalm, the relationship between verse 57 and verse 58 is important.

In verse 58, the writer is very conscious of his moral frailty. I entreat your favor. Be gracious to me. That's the cry of a frail heart. But he knows that God's grace and favor will enable him to want to keep God's words.

[11:47] Now, there's a striking parallel between these two verses and the words of a hymn which we're going to sing at the end of the service. Here are the first four lines of the hymn. O Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end.

Be now and ever near me. My master and my friend. Do you see the similarity? I've promised to serve you but be near me because I'm as weak as water.

That's what our psalmist is saying to the Lord. I promise to keep your words but help me. I'm weak. I need your favor and grace. Let me suggest a way of praying along the lines of these two verses. You might pray something like this. Lord, I do want to obey you. I want to learn to love what you love and to hate what you hate. I long to have my mind deeply renewed and reshaped but be gracious to me.

I can't do this without your favor, without your help. I'm a weak person but I want more than anything to keep your words. Let's ask him to help us to want to obey him.

[12:54] But there's a great incentive here in these two verses which we haven't looked at yet and it comes at the beginning of verse 57. The Lord, he says, is my portion.

The Lord is my portion. That's why I promise to keep his words. Now when you and I use the word portion it normally means the proper amount of food for one person at one time.

Here's your portion of chips, says the man at the Blue Lagoon as he hands you your chips. You look at it and you think to yourself, it's the man wearing his glasses. That is not enough to satisfy a hamster.

But you're very polite and so you thank him and you smile and you pay up and you feel disappointed. Now that's not what the word means in verse 57. The Lord is my portion means the Lord is everything that I need.

He is my inheritance. This word portion was used earlier in the Old Testament to describe the portion of land allotted to each of the Israelite tribes as they moved into and conquered the land of Canaan.

[14:00] Each tribe had its own portion, its allotted inheritance. Now for Christians our allotted inheritance finally is to be with the Lord forever in the new creation.

Not just a parcel of old Israel but the whole of the new creation. The Lord himself is everything that we need. He is the one who brings us joy and consolation.

Jesus has opened up for us our eternal inheritance, the portion that we shall enjoy forever. The writer of another psalm, Psalm 73, puts it like this.

Just notice the word portion coming here. Whom have I in heaven but you, he says to the Lord, and there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

So if you're a Christian he is yours and you are his and you need nothing else in the end. When your flesh and strength and everything else fade away and everything on earth is passing away he

is the one that we need and he is the one that we have.

[15:14] So in our verse 57 the fact that the Lord is our portion is a great incentive to us to want to keep his words. He is our future. He is our joy.

We shall one day see him face to face. So learning to keep his words on earth is a great preparation for meeting him in the world to come. What he is doing with us is fashioning us and fitting us to dwell in his presence.

To keep his words is to have our minds renewed. His grace helps us to obey him. Now secondly from verses 59 and 60 God's commandments direct our steps.

This is closely linked with obedience but it's a slightly different point. God's commandments direct our steps. Now these two verses 59 and 60 are verses which encourage us to action.

Just think about the direction in which we're walking. Verse 59 when I think on my ways I turn my feet to your testimonies.

[16:19] The psalmist has feet. He has the power to turn them to the right or to the left. And verse 60 he has the ability to act quickly.

I hasten he says I do not delay to keep your commandments. So he's a thoughtful man. He's a thinker. When I think he says when I stop to consider what I'm doing I take pains to act in line with the Lord's revealed will.

I turn my feet he says to your testimonies. I could turn my feet away from your testimonies but I know how foolish that would be. No I'm learning to turn my feet to regulate my actions and my decisions in line with the Bible's teaching.

Now friends this is very practical isn't it? It's about the way we actually use our time and our energies. And our psalmist is showing us how to live a fruitful and godly and happy life.

So to apply this let's think about how this might work out in two areas of life. Two of the most important aspects of our lives. First money.

[17:27] Now we all need money. We all need a certain level of income if we're to survive. We have all spent money today. You might not have spent money out of your pocket in terms of coins or banknotes but we've all spent money on central heating or running the dishwasher.

You've spent it on the food that you had for breakfast the food that you had for lunch perhaps even a watery and disappointing cup of coffee from Starbucks. Our experience is that we all have money coming in and we all have money going out.

The amount that comes in always seems to be a bit less than the amount that goes out. I can never quite work that out but that's the way it feels. But money as we know is seductive. We'd always like a bit more.

And therefore we all of us get tempted to help ourselves to money that we're not entitled to. We're tempted to steal from the tax man by not declaring all of our income.

Or we're tempted to steal from our employer by working short hours or inflating our expenses claim. So let's allow our psalmist here to teach us. In verse 59 he's thinking on his ways.

[18:36] He looks at his tax return form as it comes in or comes in on the screen and he's thinking about it. He looks at his expenses claim form and again he's thinking. He's tempted.

What shall I do? He says. I would love to buy a new fridge. The old one's nearly worn out. I'd love to get a better car. I could if I just massaged the figures a little bit.

But no, no, the Lord has been teaching me to turn my feet to his testimonies. What do the Ten Commandments say? You shall not steal. Thank you Lord, thank you.

Help me Lord to love what you love which is honesty and to hate what you hate which is stealing.

And help me to be grateful and satisfied and contented with what I have.

So he pauses. He thinks. He thinks about his ways. And he turns his feet to the Lord's testimonies. Second, sex.

[19:38] Everybody is a sexual being. I'm told that when you reach the age of 98, the hormonal rush dies down a bit. But until you get to 98, you have to keep thinking on your ways.

Now the Bible teaches us, here's a quick reminder, the Bible teaches us that sex is for marriage and the Bible teaches us that marriage means one man and one woman till death us do part.

That is God's lovely recipe for sexual fulfillment and happiness. Anything else is not only unsatisfactory and unfulfilling, it is quite simply wrong in God's sight.

So there you are, verse 59, you're thinking on your ways. You're thinking about the way you live your life. You are under 98. You are a sexual being. Sex is somehow deeply woven into your very

nature.

And like the man looking thoughtfully at his tax return form, you too are looking thoughtfully at your life, and you are tempted to turn your feet in the wrong direction.

[20 : 41] You're tempted to lure into your embrace somebody that you're not married to. It might be a temptation to adultery, it might be a temptation to homosexual activity, it might be a temptation to look at pornography on the internet.

Even though you know that viewing pornography damages your very ability to function sexually if you were to marry subsequently. If you didn't know that, you need to know it.

Now all of these temptations can be very powerful. So what does our psalmist do? He thinks on his ways. God and because he's constantly crying out in the words of verse 64, Lord, teach me your statutes, not just what they are but the depth of them, teach me to understand them deeply.

Because he's constantly crying out that prayer, he turns his feet away from the forbidden and wretched and miserable land of temptation and with relief and joy he goes the way of the Lord's commandments and not the way of sin.

The way of obedience is of course the way of happiness. But the devil will always whisper to us that it's disobedience that will bring joy. The devil is a consummate liar.

[21 : 56] But in verse 60, the psalmist gives us a very practical clue as to how to turn our feet to the Lord's testimonies. Look at verse 60. And the practical clue is to hasten.

I hasten, he says, and do not delay to keep your commandments. In other words, he's saying, when the temptation comes to me, as soon as I'm aware of it, I pick up my feet and I run.

I don't dilly-dally. I don't stop to have a word with the tempter. I don't stop to ask him to clarify his suggestion and tell me whether he means this or does he mean that. No, I run.

To hesitate is often to be lost. Remember Lot's wife? She hesitated, didn't she? She delayed. She was torn between two competing ways of life and she was overcome by fire and brimstone.

She looked back longingly to the way of life that the Lord was calling her to forsake and she became a pillar of salt. Don't delay, that's what our psalmist is teaching.

[23 : 01] Just imagine the devil having a training conference one day with some of his junior devils. And this group of devils in training come and look at Glasgow one day. Look at that Tron church, says the devil.

Those Christians, they're getting very serious these days about broadcasting the bad news. People are joining the enemy's ranks, far too many of them. Any suggestions from you young ones about our tactics?

Well, says one young devil, let's tell them there's no God. That's no good, says the devil. Modern atheism is a threadbare creed these days, they're never going to swallow that nonsense. Okay, says another junior, let's tell people that there's no judgment.

That's a slightly better suggestion, says the devil, but they do have a deeply inbuilt sense of right and wrong and accountability these days. I can't see that ploy being very effective.

Then a third junior pipes up and says, I know, let's tell them there's no hurry. Spot on, my boys.

Spot on, says the devil. That'll keep whole hosts of them on board for destruction.

[24 : 12] Look at verse 60. God has put it there for a very good reason. I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. Procrastination is the thief of not only time, but of eternal life for so many people.

The time to flee from temptation is now, today. The time to decide is this very moment. Not in an hour's time, not tomorrow morning. The time to turn, the time to repent is now.

The time to turn to Christ is now, if you've never done it. We all of us stand on the very lip of eternity. Any one of us might step into eternity next week. We feel safe and secure in this life, don't we?

But we're not. What is the greatest, what is the most pressing commandment in the whole Bible? What does the whole Bible drive towards? It's this commandment, come to the Lord Jesus, put your trust in him and be saved.

I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments. When the tempter whispers something in our ear, we must run and do what is right. Now thirdly, from verses 61 and 62, God's law strengthens us in the face of opposition.

[25 : 28] Let's look at verse 61 first, which is such an encouraging verse. Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law. Our psalmist, like any believer, finds himself in trouble

at times, and the trouble he experiences comes at him from the malice of people who are no friends of God.

That phrase, the wicked, doesn't necessarily mean murderers or terrorists. It means any person who disregards God. The most wicked thing any person can do is to pay no attention to the God who made us.

And in verse 61, our psalmist feels that certain godless people have ensnared him with cords.

They're trying to catch him and trip him up and bring him to ruin.

Perhaps they're making false allegations against him. They're trying to smear his reputation.

They're trying to shipwreck him. Jesus had to endure this kind of thing again and again.

People accused him falsely, called him a blasphemer and a breaker of God's law. They tried to trap him into saying something which they could use against him so as to bring him to trial and to capital punishment.

[26 : 42] In fact, you find this tactic being used again and again throughout the Bible. An innocent, godly person is falsely accused by people who want to ruin him. Think of Daniel.

Daniel, who was falsely accused and ended up in the den of lions. But in the words of verse 61, he did not forget God's law. He remembered it. In fact, it was because he was keeping God's law that he ended up in the den of lions in the first place.

But he kept God's law and he was rescued. Think of Joseph back in the book of Genesis. He was falsely accused of attempted rape by Potiphar's wife, but he was innocent and he was finally vindicated.

Look again at our verse 61. What do we do when the cords of the wicked tighten around us? Do we rage against injustice and take offense at God and perhaps throw away our Bible?

No, says our teacher the psalmist, we don't forget God's law. It's precisely by reading the stories of Joseph and Daniel and Jesus and many others that we're given strength to persevere.

[27 : 51] And even if we're not vindicated in this life, we shall be vindicated in by the righteous judge at the end because Jesus himself is our vindication. And look at verse 62.

At midnight I rise to praise you. It's all linked with this business of the cords of the wicked. At midnight I rise to praise you.

Do you remember what happened to Paul and Silas at Philippi? They were falsely accused. Falsely accused of anti-Roman activity. They were attacked by a mob. They were badly beaten up.

They were thrown into jail and had their feet put into stocks. No trial involved. Just straight into prison like that. And what did they do? I'll read from Acts chapter 16. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God.

And the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And to cut a long story short, they were rescued. They were ensnared by the chords of the wicked and they were singing hymns at midnight.

[28 : 59] The point is that even when life throws the most horrible experiences at us, when godless people are trying to damage us or ruin us, we don't forget God's words.

In fact, they become even more precious to us. Now in this country today, we're living at a time when it's less comfortable, much less comfortable to be a Christian than it was a generation or two back.

Godless forces are trying to stop evangelism taking place. The churches are less free and less honored. We feel as if godless chords are tightening around us.

Well, friends, let's be brave and let's follow our psalmist's teaching. Though the chords of godlessness are trying to ensnare us, let's not forget God's law.

It's the Bible which will keep us steady and sane and faithful and persevering. Even at midnight, even at the darkest times, when fears seem to be most potent, let's praise the Lord then, because verse 62, his rules, his teaching, are righteous, right, true.

[30 : 09] It's the Bible that will give us strength to persevere in a godless age. We're now fourth, and this is a huge encouragement from verses 63 and 64.

God's people are our true companions. The wicked may try to ensnare us with their cords, but here's the joy of our situation.

Verse 63, I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts. companions.

We're not alone in a hostile environment. We have many companions who are a source of immeasurable strength to us.

Just taking my glasses off so I can see you for a moment. Just have a look around at your companions. Is that a happy sight? These are our companions in the faith.

If we're Christians, we're companions to each other in this battle. How do our friendships with each other in the church help us? Let me give you seven quick reasons.

[31 : 12] Very quick ones, don't worry. Seven things. First, our friends in the church are a great antidote to loneliness. I think the prime minister had to appoint a star for loneliness, didn't he, a year or two ago, because of the sense of loneliness and isolation in so many people in the country.

Once we're Christians, we never have to experience loneliness. Secondly, our Christian friends spur us on to obedience and godliness. Third, they encourage us to be evangelistic, to be unashamed of the Bible.

Fourth, they strengthen our confidence that the Bible is the truth. That's one of the things that we do for each other. By living out the Bible, we teach each other again and again that the Bible is the truth.

Fifth, our Christian friends school us, train us in love. How to be more concerned for others than for ourselves. Sixth, they enable us to laugh and to have fun and relax together.

One of the best things that you can say to a Christian friend is ha ha ha ha ha or even ho ho ho ho ho. We live in a fun-starved world, don't we?

[32 : 24] And the Lord has given us a great capacity for joy. It's one of the things we can do for each other, exercise a ministry of fun. We need it. And then seventh, our Christian friendships are a huge support to us when we're in real trouble, when we go through times of really painful adversity.

Now if you're a very new Christian, you may not know too much yet about this joy of Christian companionship and friendship. But if you're a long-in-the-tooth Christian, you will certainly know about it and you'll rejoice at your Christian friends.

Let's treasure and develop these friendships. They are really very, very important. Verse 63 is not for a moment calling us to cut off our friendships with those who are not Christians.

Not at all. It's we who can help them to find their way into the Lord's family. It was Christians who helped us when we were not Christians to find our way into the Lord's family.

But verse 63 is there to help us to relish and enjoy our Christian companions. Those who, in the words of the verse, fear the Lord and keep his precepts.

[33 : 33] Well, now, finally, look at verse 64. The earth, O Lord, is full of your steadfast love. Teach me your statutes. Why should our psalmist suddenly turn his gaze away from his believing companions to view the whole wide earth?

I think the reason is that he wants to set his immediate struggles and joys in their proper and much larger context. In verse 61, he's been recording his pain, his struggles, as he feels the cords of godless people tightening around him.

In verse 63, he's again thinking of life very close to home, his companions who are such a joy to him. So the wicked are hemming him in, and his companions are near to hand.

He's been thinking about the sorrows and the joys taking place in the few square yards around him. but he suddenly in verse 64 lifts his eyes to take in the vast context in which his little life is being lived out.

And that context is the earth, the whole globe. There is God, the creator and sustainer of life, holding the whole earth in his hands, nurturing its life.

[34 : 46] And what does the psalmist perceive? That it's full of the steadfast love of the Lord. Yes, life close to home may be painful and it may be joyful, but the ultimate context in which we live is filled with the steadfast love of the Lord, his covenanted love.

Therefore, in the end, for believers, all is well. Do you remember what God said to Noah? While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.

And as we look into the far future, the Bible teaches us that the earth in its present form will be destroyed, but it will be followed by the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth, where righteousness is at home, where all who belong to the Lord will rejoice together in the presence of God the Father and the Lord Jesus.

So the psalmist is showing us the landscape of the believer's life, in both its local details and in its wider context. Yes, he's teaching us some demanding lessons.

He's teaching us obedience. And more than that, he's teaching us how dangerous it is to delay. He's saying to us, I hasten to obey, and therefore you must as well, my reader.
[36 : 07] He's teaching us that the way to cope with opposition and to survive it is to stick closely to the Bible. And he's teaching us to rejoice in our believing friends.

These are the details of the landscape. But the landscape itself is broad and glorious. The Lord is my portion. The Lord is mine forever.

He is my inheritance, my future. And the earth is radiant with his steadfast love. We need to understand these things if we're to live a steady and happy Christian life.

And that's why we too, like the psalmist in verse 64, need often to cry out, Lord, teach me your statutes. Let's bow our heads and we'll pray.

Dear God, our Father, we thank you so much for this godly man, this writer of the psalm. And we thank you for that deep longing, earnest longing in his heart that he should be taught your statutes, not just superficially, but taught to understand them, to rejoice in them, and to follow them with an increasingly willing and obedient heart.

[37 : 17] And we pray that you will help us so to feed upon the Bible and to take it in to our hearts and consciences and wills, that our whole thinking is renewed and day after day is changed so that our thoughts become more like your thoughts and our values more like yours.

help us, and help us therefore to be the sort of people who draw others to Christ, that they should come to him and find life and joy, forgiveness and peace. And we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.