

Where will your treasure be in 2007? (whole service)

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Date: 31 December 2006

Preacher: William Philip (and interviews)

[0 : 00] Well, good evening and welcome to our service this evening, this Hogmanay in the city centre of Glasgow. I think we're the only thing that is actually going on in the city centre tonight.

And we're warm and dry and we're in here, so isn't that good? We're going to have a fairly informal service this evening, but we're going to begin by singing, I suppose, one of the Christmas hymns that we haven't got through.

We got through almost all of them. It's number 364, the great hymn of Charles Wesley. Let earth and heaven combine, angels and men agree, to praise in songs divine, the incarnate deity.

364 The Lord and heaven combine, angels and men agree, to praise in love divine, The Lord and heaven combine, angels and men agree, to praise in love divine, divine and guilty.

The Lord and heaven combine, angels and men agree, to praise in love divine, We're going to have a great hymn of joy, to praise in love divine, We're going to have a great hymn of joy, to praise in love divine, We're going to have a great hymn of joy, to praise in love divine, We're going to have a great hymn of joy, to praise in love divine, Amundan and heaven, and heaven come and came, to praise in love divine, At love deben of heaven, may they live, to praise in love divine, And Salish and rage in the years, to praise in love divine, She is an interstate If you're a baby can't bear you The wrong big way We're not a mysteryidirere the angels dates with hope that love and joan king adore.

[2 : 29] But on the rodzajard and the host as the host his fate is above all and reach out to him and love.

He did take them Let's pray. Amen.

We shall be found in the Lord. We shall be found in the Lord.

Well, let's join our hearts together in prayer. Let's pray, shall we? Lord, we marvel as we sing these wonderful words that remind us of the great miracle of Christmas, of the incarnation, the becoming flesh, as one of us, of our Maker, the one who made the universe, the stars, the suns, all that we can see and explore of this vast universe of ours and an infinity beyond these things.

And yet, you appeared, wearing our own flesh, to join these widest extremes of your vast eternity.

[5 : 06] And the brief whiff of our mortal lives. And you did it to bring our vileness, our filthiness, our sinful rebellion, to bring it near, that we could once again draw near to you, our Heavenly Father, without fear.

that we should know your life, the life that we had forfeited in our sin, and know it through the nearness of our Savior, who came that we might be forgiven, to save us, to do away with our sins, and to draw us into the life and the light of your own existence.

And this is the message, Lord, that we have been rejoicing in these days, in the midst of all the secular entertainment and enjoyment and fun and happiness and festivity.

Yet at the heart of all of these things, we have been rejoicing in something so much greater, something that shall be for all eternity, something that draws our minds and our hearts to think of eternity, to that day when, from the earth, we will remove, and when we will see at last your love fully shown.

And all that we were born for, all that we were created for, all that this whole world was created for in the very beginning, will just begin to take place.

[6 : 55] The glorifying of God our Maker in the redemption of all your people, and in the rejoicing and the joy and the imaging of our God and Savior that there will be for all eternity in us, in our minds and our hearts and our bodies as we become what we were destined to be, bright and

shining images reflecting the glory of our God and Maker.

And so, Lord, in the midst of the darkness of these winter days and the howling of the gales, the lashing of the rain, even as we know that summer will surely come and as the days from now will begin to lengthen and the sun will grow higher in the sky and the temperature will at last become warmer and we will again enjoy being outdoors in this beautiful planet.

So, with even greater certainty, we also know that from the darkness of these, the days of our human lives, which are but a shadow, so the sun shall steadily rise and the day will come when this world will be bathed with the light of the coming of our Savior.

And so, in the midst of this winter time, we look forward not only to the summer, but to the sunrise of all eternity, the day spring, whose light has lightened our darkness already in the coming at the first Christmas and whose light will lighten us forever at His coming in glory.

We turn our eyes to You with hope and with trust and with confidence as the calendar ticks over another year. We don't know what this year will bring, but we know, because we know our Savior, that it will bring us closer, nearer to the joy and the completeness that we long for.

[9 : 14] And so we pray, our Heavenly Father, that as we turn our hearts and minds to You this evening, looking back over this year that has passed and looking forward to that which is to come, so above all, You would turn our hearts afresh to our Lord Jesus Christ, fill us with gladness for His coming in salvation and with hope and expectation for His coming in glory.

For we ask it in His name. Amen. Well, this evening we're going to hear a little bit from one or two of the members of our congregation and we're going to be interviewing them and asking them a little bit about what they've learned and found of God in this past year and what they're looking forward to in the coming year and all that it has to hold.

And first of all, one of our very newest members is going to come and say a few words to us. Mark Haffey and Alex is going to come and take the microphone and interview Mark.

And I think we're all switched on so I can hand over to you. Thank you.

from Northern Ireland. That's our sitting beside Bob there. Yeah, moved over here about eight years ago. Yeah. And did you meet each other back over in Northern Ireland?

[11 : 02] Yeah, I went to the same school. Oh, that's nice. Got married in that school as well. Oh. So you met each other in Northern Ireland and then eight years ago you moved over to Glasgow.

What was the process? Well, about eight years ago I moved over. Didn't do well enough in my A-levels. So I had to downgrade to a polytechnic as it were, I think it was called then. And moved over here done my education.

Kira sort of followed suit once we got things going a bit further. And she got a good job here so that's the way that sort of went. Yeah. So that was something like eight years ago.

And have you been coming here to St. George's Tron for eight years? What was the process of you coming here to our church? I suppose it was about six years ago.

Am I right? I have to check. About six years ago we started coming. Didn't really get involved in the church. Just came, heard Sinclair, then heard Willie, and just gradually got into the actual system.

[12 : 09] Good. So we've been thinking about your experience here at St. George's Tron Church and your past experience and how you made it over here to Glasgow.

As we begin to think about the year 2007, I wonder if you could tell me a little about your hopes as a couple here in Glasgow. Well, I suppose this last year Cairnev sort of got more involved in the church, more involved in certain activities and that's allowed us to grow a lot more and value what the church actually does outside of the sermons.

2007, basically I want to get a job. That's the first thing I want to do. Get a life back with my wife. But there's a lot to be done forward together.

That sort of stuff, there seems to be a lot more battlegrounds that are being formed so I'd like to get more knowledge, more understanding of what God says, the truth, and also what the arguments are, the counter arguments.

Yeah. I understand that a bit more. I think we're in a very privileged position. Here in Glasgow, there's a lot of international students coming through and me being a student from Northern Ireland, I stayed in the halls.

[13 : 23] So nobody ever came and invited me to church when I was there. So I think we're missing an opportunity there and I would like to see going out at the start of term years or start of the year and inviting people to church.

I'm sure, Mark, a lot of these things we can be praying about in our own prayer lives. And I was thinking about, you mentioned that you'd be looking for work and I do know that you've been studying for a PhD.

What exactly is the subject of your PhD? kind of performance measurement. How do you measure designers working and designing artefacts and products?

It's in engineering but it's how to manage designers and allow them to optimise their performance within a process. Make more money. And what sort of occupation would that lead you towards?

What would the job title be? I don't know. That could vary from street sweeper to consultant and I'd be happier at either level.

[14:28] Great. I'd be totally happy as long as I wasn't reading papers, writing papers and having to think about what I said every time as I'm doing now. And that's great, isn't it? It's liberating being a Christian.

No matter what occupation we find ourselves in we can serve the Lord and our identity isn't in our work it's in our identity is in Christ, isn't it?

So there's plenty of things that we can be praying through and thinking about there. So thank you very much Mark. Thank you. Well it was lovely to welcome Mark and Kira into membership with us and to baptise Kira too.

And one of the things that's so lovely when people are joining the church and we really have such a sense of joy as a congregation when about three or four times a year we have people standing at the front here and professing their faith in Christ and publicly taking their stand with him.

That we have such a group of people from all different backgrounds, different nations and parts of the country, very different stories in terms of how they've come to be here, how they've come to know the Lord and how they've found their way to be part of our fellowship here.

[15:47] But there's one thing that is in common with all and that is that they've found the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord and that's what binds us all together here as a fellowship. It might be your first time here and you wonder well what do we really do here?

Why would we brave these gales and storms to come out here on a Sunday night on Hogmanay in the middle of Glasgow? Well the thing that binds us together is that we're a family of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know that he has found us, that he's opened our eyes, that he's opened our eyes to him and to his glory and therefore he's opened our eyes to one another, to see one another as our true family and there's no one that we'd rather be with than those who are our family, not just for now but forever.

And this next hymn really speaks about that one thing that binds us. It's number 694. One thing I know that Christ has healed me though I was blind yet now I see to him, to him I owe whose life has sealed me my heart and mind at last set free.

And this is a great hymn that helps to focus us on the one thing that is at the root and at the center of all that we are as a Christian church and that's a great thing for us to remember at the turn of a year and as we look ahead.

[17:03] So when the music plays then we'll stand and sing this hymn together. Number 694. One thing I know that Christ has won't■■ my heart and mind up till new Or■■ and canap breach of small because if I can fill in manicetenilate let we and Ephesians sing this this hymn Oh-mashing, I was suspended as little as the bell turned off.

Cast bodies, mine, I drove down the way, Behind me, I healed my love.

Thank you.

The faithful Lord, the new creation, the hope for God is amazing.

Our holy God, the God's salvation, the real Son forevermore.

[19:23] The faithful Lord, the new creation, the real Son forevermore.

I find very quickly where she's from. I think we should put the record straight and say you're not even nearly one of the oldest members. I've been a long, long time there.

Mary, can you tell us how long you've been at the Tron and how you're going to have to take the microphones just a little bit. And how you came to be a member here rather than in Wales. Well, you'll gather I'm from Wales, but I love Scotland.

I've been here a long time. What brought me to Wales was I was a trained nurse and midwife, but I felt I wanted to do more Bible study and be prepared perhaps if the Lord wanted me to go abroad

as a missionary.

So I came to BTI, the Bible Training Institute, as it was called then, now ICC. And I was there for two years doing a course and it was a wonderful experience and it was excellent.

[20 : 45] And I used to come to the Tron, the odd occasion, you know, in a group singing in a cafe. Some people don't remember the cafe. And I was Baptist, you see, before I came to Scotland.

So I took a minute and a while, but I came into membership. I think it was about mid-70s. And that's, I've been here ever since. It's a good year to get. Yes, I think so. Thank you.

And Mary, can you tell us what you've been learning from the Lord over the last year in 2006? Well, it's been quite a year actually. The year before, I had a knee replacement.

I had to take early retirement, just worn out joints. And perhaps the mountain, I climbed a few Monroes as well. So that didn't help. So this year I thought it was going to be quite a good year. I had to offer from friends who used to be at the church to go to the Bahamas for a holiday. So of course I went as soon as I could and had three lovely weeks in Bahamas.

[21 : 44] Came back to be told that I needed a very major surgery to my ankle, the other leg. And so I was so thankful to the Lord that I'd had a good holiday before going in to have the surgery.

Because it left me with a plaster on my leg for ten weeks and I wasn't able to wait bare. So it was quite an experience, hopping around on a wheelchair and various things.

And then after that, it was eight weeks in a boot. And I looked as if I was either going to the moon or I was going out skiing or something. But through all, it was a difficult time, but I had a tremendous peace.

I'm usually a very active person. It's very difficult to sort of tie me down. And it was a good experience just to be there. I know I was there for God's purpose. I was, you know, and it was a wonderful, I love hymns.

And one of Augusta's top lady, his hymn said, Safe in the arms of sovereign love. And I thought, what better place to be while I'm like this?

[22 : 49] And there's a purpose for me being like this. So I've only just come out of plaster on the 1st of November when I could celebrate. And I've had to learn to walk again. So it's been a year that I didn't expect.

But it's been a good year. I've trusted the Lord more. And, you know, and I just know he's with me all the time. Thank you. And we tried to craft a really, really cunning question for 2007 and came up with, How about next year?

Yes. Well, it might be my hip next year. There's not much bones left, I think, to sort out. I'm hoping it won't be. I'm saying that in jest.

It might be. But, you know, this coming year, it's like a canvas that's really quite blank at the moment. Because when I retired, I said to the Lord, I'm available to go anywhere, do anything. Plus, we shouldn't say that sometimes to the Lord. But I just am available for whatever he wants me to do in this coming year. I am on a missionary committee in Scotland, an evangelised field mission.

[23 : 53] And I have plans to go and visit two of our missionaries, single missionaries, one in Turkey and one in France. So that's only two things at the moment I've got planned for the coming year.

But I feel, you know, the next hymn we're going to sing was one that we sang at BTI. The greatest I, faithfulness. Oh God, my Father. And that's exactly what I want to say tonight.

He's been faithful since I became a Christian when I was just eight, a long time ago. And he's kept me all these years. And I know that I'm available for him to do whatever he wants. And I love the Tron.

And I've been here a long, long time, gone through a lot of ministers. But it's, you know, it's my home. And I'm really grateful to be here. Thank you very much. Well, we are going to sing number 258.

You might like to turn it up and just look at these words. We sing it so often, don't we? And there's a, I suppose, a temptation to look at these words rather tritely and sing these kind of things.

[24 : 58] It's helpful to remember, isn't it, that that chorus really comes from the book of Lamentations. Remember, when the writer is lamenting the terrible destruction of Jerusalem, the captivity of God's people, the absolute desolation when God seemed to every human eye to have deserted his people, to have broken his promises to them, to have cast terrible judgment upon them in a way that was almost unimaginable for his people.

A desolating desertion by God. And the book of Lamentations, if you know it and if you read it, it has an incredible pathos to it as the poetry speaks of that sense of great desolation.

And yet, it comes to a chorus of words almost identical to these here. Great is thy faithfulness, morning by morning, new mercies I see.

Even in the midst of not actually being able to see any evidence at all of the mercy of God, or the promise of God being kept true. Nevertheless, the writer was able to say these things as a confession of faith.

And so really it is when we're in positions like that, when we have had great struggles, when we've really been put back to bear trust in God, that words like these begin to ring true for us.

[26 : 26] I don't know if you're like me, but it just doesn't seem possible for me to learn to trust God more by good times alone. I'm always wishing that maybe next year I'll learn everything the easy way.

But it never seems to happen. It seems to be the hard way. And it seems to be that the Lord has to often chide us in order to teach us these things. But this is a wonderful hymn and it speaks of the great faithfulness of our God and the fact that he is with us and that we can trust him.

And maybe that's something that would encourage some of us tonight, who particularly are looking forward to 2007. And it does seem to be nothing but bleakness and blackness for us.

Well, great is the faithfulness of our God and Father. So let's sing number 258. Let's sing number 258.

International Chrycrows Rich All I have needed, I have had brought my dead.

[28 : 21] Great in my days, I have brought unto thee. Some who have been blessed in the land of our land, some who have died in the forest above, my faithful faithfulness that is no witness, to thy faithfulness, mercy and glory.

Great in thy faithfulness, great in thy faithfulness, for I have made thy faithfulness, all I have needed, I have brought my dead.

Great in my days, I have brought unto thee. I have brought to thee, my faithfulness, and your hand, my own dear presence, to ye and to guide, strength for today and rightful for tomorrow, that in all life we have done and rejoice.

Praise in thy faithfulness, praise in thy faithfulness, praise in thy faithfulness, glory, my glory, till I see thy feet.

Christ, my faithfulness, Christ, my faithfulness, for I have made thy faithfulness, and my faithfulness, praise in thy faithfulness, and my faithfulness, and my faithfulness.

[30 : 32] Oh no, it's Scott Hamilton, come on up. At last we've got a Scotsman. Three cheers. Here you are, you can have this, because I've got one here.

So Scott, you're not one of our newest members, but you're probably one of our younger, almost, not perhaps the youngest, but probably one of the youngest members. Tell us how old you are, and tell us how long you've been here in St. George's Tron.

I am 17 years old. I turned 17 in August, and I'm in sixth year at Williamwood High School, and I have been at the Tron all my life. Mum and Dad are here, Granny and Grandpa are here, so you could say that Hamilton's kind of integrated into the church.

A fully integrated family, good. Now, tell us about when you yourself joined the church, because it wasn't that long ago, was it, that you stood at the front here and professed your faith. No, it was about three years ago, and it was a great day, because I didn't know what to expect.

I don't think I fully understood what it meant to join the church. I don't think I fully anticipated what was going to come, but I joined the church, and it was straight away, put on the rotor for various things, thrown in the deep end.

[31 : 52] No, but it was great, because I really feel part of the family, part of the congregation. Are you glad that you did? Yes, very much so. Highly recommended. And what effect do you think it's had on your own Christian life, being what you might call a fully-fledged member of the church here these last year or two?

I've got to know a lot more people, actually, because, as I said, I've been put on more rotas, and I've attended more events, and I think that it's helped me to get to know more people, which in turn has helped me to be a bit more kind of outgoing, and more confident about my faith and about what I believe in and stuff, for telling other people.

So, yes, it's helped me, both as a Christian and as a person. Now, you're still at school. You're in your last year, is that right? Six years. Yes, yes, six years. And tell us a bit about what you've found, I suppose, the biggest challenges and the hardest things about being a Christian at school and standing up for your faith.

Well, I think, fortunately, I've never really had the problem with being teased or being cast out as a Christian, but I think one of the most difficult things for me is being kind of, I tend to be kind of like, I'm not really particularly outgoing about my faith.

I don't really tell a lot of people. I kind of struggle with that. But I think, like, over the summer, being at various camps and leadership programs and stuff, I think it's really helped me be to be a bit more kind of like that.

[33 : 30] Something that all of us find difficult and struggle with. You say that being at the camps and things has helped you overcome some of that. How do you think that's helped? Just being part of a team, getting this sort of team spirit and going.

And it's great being at camps and stuff because when you're all there, there's a good, like, I was just at a camp a couple of days ago there and there was like 90 of us there, all crammed into Lounjipmure.

And we were all there, we were all singing, we were all, like, dancing and whatnot. Well, I wasn't dancing. But we were all singing and dancing and it's just such a great feeling being with, like, lots of other Christians and it really helps you because it kind of recharges you for when you go back to, like, school and everyday life.

So the encouragement of being with other folk your own age who are Christians too and facing the same things and so on. What about next year? What does the summer hold for you when you finish school?

Well, results permitting, I'll be off to university. I think I'll be staying. Well, here. I'll stay in Glasgow. A true glass weekend.

[34 : 37] Yeah, a true troner. Not that we want you to go. Hopefully to study French or Spanish or politics or something along those lines.

And then, I don't know what the future holds me after that. What do you think the challenges will be for you as you start that as a student? I mean, apart from, obviously, the work and the change from school and so on.

In terms of your Christian faith? Well, I don't think, I mean, when I attend, like, the CU and, like, NAVs and stuff, hopefully then, I mean, I'll get to know more Christians and it'll be good in that sense.

But I think, like, trying to make more friends, like, trying to make more non-Christian friends will be, I think, a challenge for me because I'll need to try and be able to kind of, like, try and share my faith a bit more.

So I think that'll probably be the biggest problem for me. But, I mean, I'll pray about it and I think me and God will give it a fair go. What do you, if you look back over this last year, 2006, you've obviously done a lot of things and it's, I suppose it's hard to think of them all.

[35 : 44] But are there particular things that you look back to? You say you feel you've grown as a Christian. Are there particular things that highlight in your mind things that have helped you and things that have been of significant moments for you?

Yeah, at camps, I think, like, after a third, fourth day into the camp as a leader, then you're quite tired and you get a bit grumpy and then people start arguing with each other.

But I think, like, eventually you realise that what's keeping you going is not yourself and it's not, like, through the water and it's not kind of, like, and, like, how tired you are. It's, like, the Holy Spirit is working in you and he's keeping you going.

And I found that really encouraging when I realised that, like, when it came to, like, the fourth, fifth day, as I say. So that was really encouraging. And, um, so you'll presumably be doing, hopefully doing more camps and missions and things as this year goes on.

Do you have any particular spiritual ambitions for the year 2007? Probably just... You might just randomly ask somebody in the audience that just shortly, too, so be thinking.

[36 : 47] Probably just to, um, just keep on, keep on, keep on keeping on, basically, as a Christian and keep on, like, just to grow with God because, like, ever since I became a Christian, like, even through difficult times, it's always been on the up.

I mean, I've always felt myself, like, getting to know God better and God getting to know me better and, like, just, like, being better friends with God. And I think that, um, my spiritual ambition would just, like, to be to keep this going and to, like, really just get to know him better.

And, like, yeah. If you could, uh, gaze into the future, say, ten years in advance, now that's a very long time for somebody your age, but supposing I was to be interviewing you on a night like this in ten years' time, what do you think you'd like to be, uh, doing?

I know it's difficult to be specific, but is there, is there anything in your heart that you feel that you would like to be doing in ten years' time and telling me about? Um, hopefully I'll be able to fluently speak French and Spanish.

Um, if it's not too ambitious, I'd quite like to be married. Um, uh, but, um, apart from that, um, probably just settle down and, um, sort of, like, still, as I say, growing as a Christian, still, like, keeping ties with, like, Christians I know at the moment because, uh, all the Christians I know at the moment are fantastic people and I really appreciate their, their friendships with me and, um, so probably just, yeah, sort of a more grown-up version of me.

[38 : 08] A more grown-up version of you. Well, that would be pretty good. Thanks very much, Scott. That's great. That's a pretty good ambition to have for next year, isn't it? A more grown-up version of me.

That would be good for all of us. Well, we're going to, uh, have a short pause as we, uh, take up our offering, uh, for the evening. I might just give us, uh, a moment to pause ourselves and use the quiet as we think about some of these things we've heard and we think about the year ahead for ourselves and perhaps get clear in our own minds what our desires and our thoughts are and what our prayers are for the Lord to be helping us to become a more grown-up version of us, uh, next year.

But as we do that, our offerings will be received. And if we go up to the heart, through the hour, and we provide our prayers to our united people and then to make it as much as we came to our only one unless anyone has available now, as much as that.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[40 : 21] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

All the time that we've had in our lives past and all the time that there may yet be for us in the future is granted by you.

All that we are doing is done for you and for your glory for eternity. We thank you, Lord, that it is possible to live a life of fruitfulness and of meaning in this world of ours.

[42 : 47] We thank you that none of our labor in the Lord is in vain ever. And we pray that you would receive us and use us in your service this coming year.

That we might be fruitful for our Lord Jesus Christ. That we might bring pleasure to the heart of our Heavenly Father as we shine for Jesus in this world of ours, in our personal world, in the world of our work life, our home life, our civic life.

Grant us, we pray, that our offering might be pleasing in your sight and that all that we are and all that we have might be yours.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. Just a couple of notices that I should mention. As we said this morning, on Saturday coming, we are hoping to have a walk for all members of the congregation who would like to come, young and old, fit and the other.

And there will be two versions of the walk. And I think there might even be a third version for those who really just want to walk around the car park and have a flagon of tea or something like that. So don't let that put you off if you feel that you'd like to come.

[44 : 01] We're going to be meeting up in the car park at Balmaha by Loch Lomond at 10.15 on Saturday morning. If you need a lift, we can provide that. There are going to be some folk meeting in front of the halls at Bath Street at 9 o'clock.

But if you're going to do that, if you need a lift, maybe you could give a phone or email to Alan McBride. Alan, will you stand up? Wave your arms so people can see you. There he is. There's Alan. He's our leader.

So Alan's the man. And he grabbed hold of him after. There's yellow sheets in the vestibule that have all his details and things as well. And he's a, what do you call yourself?

A forest ranger. Is that right? He's a forest ranger, so we'll be all right. So we can follow him on Saturday. And do come along. It'll be a lovely time to enjoy the scenery and the exercise together. Then next Sunday we meet as usual. And in the evening we'll be having our evening communion and our covenant renewal service at the beginning of the year.

[45 : 02] And as I said this morning, we're remembering and praying for the family of our late elder James Bellingham, whose funeral is to be on Wednesday morning at Maryhill Crematorium at 9.30.

And you'll have that in your prayers, I'm sure. Well, we're going to sing once again. Then I'm going to just say a few words really by way of an epilogue for this evening. It's number 601.

A lovely hymn and a lovely tune. But as we know, the lovely words don't necessarily fit the lovely tune just perfectly. So we've come to discover we have to change the words of the chorus.

Believe me, it will help it fit a little bit better. So if you see in that third line where it says, Believing in him, it just doesn't work if you sing those words. It's all wrong.

So I'm going to suggest that we sing, Whoever trusts in him. Whoever trusts in him shall find eternal life. Trust me and you'll see that it fits the music better. But apart from that, it's really very good.

[46 : 01] So we'll sing 601. We come, beg for you to pray.

Because I will sing.

Be pam mbound.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[48 : 54] Amen. We'll read just a few verses from our Lord's teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6 and verse 19.

And we studied this when we were beginning Matthew's Gospel, it was over a year ago now. But tonight we're just going to look at these few verses really. The Lord says, I'll just keep these verses open in front of you.

We'll refer to the ones that follow in just a minute or two. But I want to ask you this question. Where is your treasure going to be in the year 2007?

Letters can be very revealing, can't they? I recently read a Christmas letter that was sent to my parents actually.

I don't know about you, but I always read my parents' letters when I go and visit them. I read a letter written from a man who has had a wonderfully fruitful Christian ministry right through his lifetime.

[51 : 05] He's an American. I haven't seen him for decades, but we have occasionally been in touch. He was a chaplain, as it happens, in the United States Air Force. I can't recall exactly how he and my father became friends.

But if I have it rightly, he was in Edinburgh visiting. And he happened into our church. And he found something in the ministry there, in the Bible teaching ministry there, that he'd never really encountered anywhere else.

And he wanted to get to know my father. Soon he had him out in Germany, I think, preaching at one or two conferences for US servicemen and for chaplains and so on.

And they became lifelong friends and they're still in touch. And actually, interestingly, that's something that I often find. I think it must be true, mustn't it? That the key to real and deep friendships in life are, very often when they're friendships that have begun through a shared love of Christ and his work and his word.

When people are being brought together by something so vital and important as that, often the friendships that begin like that, they have a certain power about them, a certain quality that's enduring, that outlasts so many other things.

[52 : 25] It's often the way, isn't it? I'm sure you've experienced that. Actually, it's just as true as well, isn't it, for the friendships between members of the opposite sex that end up and grow into lifelong relationships of marriage.

Isn't that right? Certainly, in my experience, those that have begun through people being drawn together, having shared a common love for Christ and his word and his work that's drawn them into comradeship and unity of purpose, that later on has flowered into romance and marriage, those have been the relationships that have a quality about them, a power and a lasting nature.

True in all friendships, but it's true there too. One of the reasons, actually, why I have major concerns about the kind of, well, what do you call it, personal ad approach to relationships. You know, the personal columns in the paper, or these days, I suppose, much more it's on the internet, isn't it? People seeking a relationship. That worries me because it's seeking first the relationship, one with another, which I think in a rightly ordered sense, in a Christian setup, comes after two people have been drawn together by a common love of Christ and a desire to serve them together.

That's the purpose of marriage, after all, isn't it? Serving Christ more fruitfully. I'm getting sidetracked there. Anyway, this man, that's for another day.

[53 : 53] This man had a wonderful ministry and he's now retired. He lives in Austin in Texas in the United States. But throughout his career in the United States Air Force, in the chaplaincy, he led many, many young men to Christ.

Something we often forget about, isn't it? A very fertile place for ministering to young men. And that many of these men that he led to Christ are in the ministry today, mainly in America, but in other places too.

I know some of them quite well. This man's now in his 70s and this letter that I read was a very striking one.

It was very short. It was transparently uncluttered by all of the kinds of things that you might say moth and rust can destroy.

Here's a quote from his very short letter. And his handwriting is almost as bad as my handwriting. But I've deciphered it.

[54 : 54] He said this, I find myself looking forward to heaven more and more with joy and anticipation. And then he added this, But I find that today so few Christians seem to think this way anymore.

Isn't that striking? I was very struck by those words and it made me think. And I thought, well, if that's right, what's changed?

Is it true that Christians now just aren't by and large thinking like that? Thinking about eagerly looking forward to heaven, to the coming of Christ's kingdom?

Because if that is right, then we can't have really begun to understand the words of Jesus that we just read, can we? But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves don't break in and steal.

Well, I started thinking about the evidence presented perhaps by some of the other Christmas letters that I've read. I thought to myself, if they are a true indication of what our concerns and our thoughts are, then I'd have to say it seems that my American friend is right.

[56 : 18] I know there's been a lot of bashing about Christmas letters. If you're a Guardian reader, you'll know that Simon Hoggart is always asking people to send copies of these letters into him. And he likes to tell us about the very worst possible ones that he's ever received.

I was just reading yesterday's paper. I only get the Guardian on a Saturday, by the way. I'm not that bad. Here was one. Young Penelope is clearly following in the family tradition. She got a first in PPE at Oxford this year.

That's the kind of thing you sometimes get in these letters. But I'm not against Christmas letters. I'm not against letters with family news and these sort of things. We get lots of letters and lots of news and catch up from friends that we just don't see anymore during the year.

And it's good to do that. It's good to keep in touch. And I've often written these letters too. I haven't done the last couple of years. I don't seem to have time. I just say to people, now look at the Tron website and find out what we're doing and that'll be enough for you.

But I have to say this. And nobody in the Tron has written me a Christmas letter this year so you can sit back.

[57 : 22] I do have to say that most of the time when I get Christmas letters from other people, other Christians, I find that they present really a very contrasting picture to that letter I read from this American man.

There isn't really very much sense in them of, quotes, looking forward to heaven more and more with joy and anticipation. I wonder if you've found that too.

Let me ask you, how many letters did you receive or maybe write that dropped even a hint in the midst of all the family news and all of these things, that dropped even a hint of the realm beyond the

moth and the rust?

Or of the yearning for the eternal treasure that our Lord is speaking about here? Now, maybe that you did.

I very much hope so. But I rather suspect it's probably otherwise. And probably if you did, it was perhaps the minority. I think it's more likely that as we scan these pages and we're hoping for significant news, for meaningful insights, instead, we find something different.

[58 : 42] And it's always often in the midst of a maddeningly small type. I don't know if your friends are like mine, but they use these funny curly fonts that are really hard to read or it's really tiny. I've got one friend who uses a curly font and really tiny, tiny type.

And it has in two columns on two sides of A4. It really drives me mad trying to get these things read. But when we've squinted through it all and tried hard to read all this news that we're being given at Christmas, I have to say that I find it's often mainly full of descriptions of the exotic holidays that we've enjoyed or the home improvements that we've completed in the last year or the talents of our children that we're celebrating or the new possessions that we've had or these sorts of things. Isn't that right? Is that what you find? It's almost as though these things have actually come to define the genre of the Christmas letter, isn't it? I mean, that's why somebody like Simon Hobart can make a laugh of it in the newspaper.

But it does just seem to be the same for us as Christians, as for those who are not Christian people. It seems to be that the things that moth and rust destroy are the things that fill our letters.

I remember a couple of years ago I got one from a Christian friend and almost two-thirds of the letter was a detailed in-depth description of the fancy new car that he got complete with DVD players in the back seat for the kids.

[60 : 14] I must say I was really very jealous. I had an acute attack of covetousness because we were about to drive up from London back up to Scotland when we were living down in London in our tiny little Peugeot 205 with two children and everything piled up to the roof and I must say I did think the idea of DVDs for the children would be wonderful.

I'm not against DVDs in the car for children. I wish I had one. But it seems that not many of these letters that I've been getting and perhaps you've been getting have any room for anything at all about church life or the Lord Jesus or the life to come that my American friend is longing for eagerly with expectation.

In fact, one of the sad things I find is that I've read through letters of Christian friends that I was at university with and maybe I've lost touch with haven't seen for I don't know ten years or more and at the end of the letter I find myself asking the question I wonder if they're still even professing the faith at all.

I wonder if you've had that experience. You just read through and there's not been any hidden or anything at all to encourage me to think this person is still walking with the Lord.

I just don't know. Now, don't get me wrong, don't misunderstand. I'm not despising material things. I'm not suggesting for a minute that we get all sanctimonious and artificial about our letters and write nothing but all sorts of pious things as though we were some sort of saint or something.

[61 : 50] I'm not despising these things at all. We don't want to be unnatural. We're not to be contrived. God doesn't want us to be like that. He wants us to be natural. He wants us to be real, normal, healthy human beings of course.

And we mustn't despise the world that we live in and the things that we do and the holidays that we take and all these sorts of things. But if if we are Christian people, if we're believers, wouldn't you think that wouldn't you think that at the very least in our letters, in fact in our general conversation, in our demeanour, in the things that we talk about and are concerned with, even in the mundane things of life, shouldn't there be at least a sense, at least a hint of the things that really matter?

A sense of where our hearts are, where our treasure really is. Shouldn't that be the case? Because Jesus says where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

You see, if we if we on this earth are really just dwell as in tents, if we're still looking forward to the city that has real foundations, and that is what the gospel tells us, isn't it?

That's just what Edward is speaking about this morning. It's about eternal life, isn't it? If that's true, then shouldn't our hearts desires be well, maybe a little more discernible than often they seem to be?

[63 : 39] If we're listening to Jesus, that is. What does he say? Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal.

I wonder what you think about that. For myself, I have to face up to the reality that I guess it's true that our hearts' desires are discernible.

We can't actually hide them. They're on display. But the problem is it's just that my real treasure isn't always in the right place.

And what my heart is desiring is displayed in the kind of things that I'm thinking about and talking about and maybe writing letters about. You see in verse 22, look at that there, would you?

You see, Jesus goes on to speak about the need for a healthy eye. eye. The eye is the lamp of the body, so if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

[64 : 50] What he's talking about there in the healthy eye, or if you've got an old King James version, it calls it the single eye. I rather like that. He's talking about the clear vision, the clear perspective that alone can give us a right outlook on life.

A right outlook on this life because it always has in focus the ultimate realities, the true treasure of heaven.

And it's the only way we can really understand this life and our life on this earth, according to Jesus, if our eye is singly focused on the things that really matter, the treasures that are eternal, the treasures in heaven.

heaven. But perhaps you see, our Christmas letters and our thoughts and our own focus in life, perhaps these things are exposing in us a blurred vision and a myopia.

Perhaps they are giving actually a very clear picture of the things of our heart, but our hearts are not always chasing the right treasure. I think that is the affliction of a people who are blessed materially, isn't that right?

[66 : 07] We live with material blessing, we live with wealth and comfort that can only be imagined by so many of the world's population. I don't think that's the affliction of our Christian brothers and sisters in Iraq or in Pakistan or in northern Nigeria or other places where Christians are being persecuted, where many of them are destitute, where they have nothing.

But it is the affliction of those that have great earthly treasure. And I think it's true that these letters and our own thoughts and our own priorities in life, they expose the truth, don't they, about the things that really do matter to us.

I suddenly find that. I think in our letters, but also in our diaries, our credit card bills, I'm not sure I'd like my credit card bill for December to be plastered up for public viewing in the church, I'm sure you wouldn't like it either.

These things, they all display the truth about what our real treasure is and what our priorities in life are. And Jesus says, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Phillips Brooks was a famous American preacher. He wrote hymns too, he wrote A Little Time of Bethlehem that we've just been singing at Christmas.

[67 : 36] He once said this, very perceptive I think, the more we watch the lives of men, the more we see that one of the reasons why men are not occupied with great thoughts and interests is the way in which their lives are overfilled with little things.

I've certainly often find myself convicted as I've examined my own heart that my life's been too full of little things taking up my horizons. I have to ask myself that question, is my eye single?

Is it healthy? Is my vision healthy so that I'm looking at the big things? so that I can have the great thoughts about the things that really count the eternal kingdom of Christ?

Is that filling my field of vision? It's only if that's true, says Jesus, will my whole body be full of light. In other words, will my life in this world be what it ought to be?

And will it begin to reach the potential of what it could be and what it should be and what it ought to be? I just find it so easy to be taken up with the here and now.

[68 : 53] I find it so easy to be taken up with the things of this world. I suspect you do as well because they're all around us. And there are many good things and good gifts and blessings that God has showered us with.

And yet, Jesus says, even the greatest of these treasures, good as they may be, they'll go the way of the moth or the rust. And we are to be putting our trust, our effort and our energy into things that moth and rust simply cannot even begin to destroy.

So I want to ask you the question, I want to ask myself the question at the beginning of a new year. Where is my treasure? Where is your treasure? Where is it going to be in 2007?

I think all of us as a fellowship, as a family, need to help one another. It's so easy to fill our lives with little things. We need to keep encouraging one another to turn our eyes, our single eye, back to the big thing, to the things that are eternal.

Maybe you'll share my resolution for the new year, to turn my back on a life too overfilled with little things. It's a telling phrase. isn't it?

[70 : 13] Is your life overfilled with little things? Well, mine is. And I want to seek with a new passion in the year 2007, the only treasure that can satisfy the solid joys, the lasting treasure of a coming heavenly kingdom, of a kingdom that can never be destroyed by anything, never mind moth and rust.

It's not really an option, by the way. According to Jesus, that must be our resolution, not just for this new year, but for every day. Look down to verse 24. You see, he says, no one can serve two masters.

Do you see that? Either he'll hate the one and love the other, or he'll be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God. God. And, well, the old version says, mammon means this material world.

Not you must not, but you cannot. It's impossible. Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. You can only either be all out for God and his kingdom and the treasure that's eternal, or you're totally in the slavery of the little things of this world that'll pass away.

That's the truth according to Jesus. That's my desire for this coming year, but I can't do it by myself. I need you to help me. We all need one another to help each other, don't we?

[71 : 40] It's very hard. It's going against the tide of everything in this world. Everything on Buchanan Street speaks about accumulating the things that moth and rust will destroy.

Isn't that right? And we need some of them. We must have some of them. We can rejoice in some of them and enjoy them. God's given us many good gifts. But he says, remember.

Remember where they're going to go. Remember the things that really matter. I want to finish with a quote from another letter. This is one that I got just last week. It's from another minister, actually, somebody who's now in their 80s.

And they're retired. Although one of the things he said in this letter was that he managed to preach for half of the Sundays in the last year. So I don't call that retirement. The letter tells about health getting frailer.

It tells about many causes of sadness in the year past with very, very deep and close friends having passed away. It speaks about a child of theirs, a mother of two, still living with cancer.

[72 : 48] It speaks of a wife who's increasingly frail and very poor health. But let me read to you how this letter began. Dear friends, we wish we could write to each of you individually, but that's just not possible.

Things take us far longer nowadays, and when the medication wears off, my wife is not able to do much at all. But these are small problems compared to the ones many of you face.

We often remind each other how much there is to be thankful for. Though we are aware that we know not what a day may bring. We simply accept that at our age and with the various health problems we both have, there are limitations.

Our times are in God's hand and we are gladly learning in a new stage of life to be content. Our hearts are warmed as we look back and remember the kindness of friends, and even more as we think how God has shepherded us over so many years.

Well, I hope I'm still writing letters like that when I'm in my 80s, don't you?

[74 : 00] Contentedness, trust in God, thankfulness, despite humanly speaking all kinds of things that we could grumble and complain about and be fearful about.

What's the secret of being able to write a letter like that to your friends when you're in your 80s?

Well, it's very simple.

Not easy, but it is simple. It's having a single eye. It's having a clear vision of Christ and his glory, reigning supreme in your heart.

But not just when you reach your 80s, all through all the decades that lead up to that. Do you want to be a thankful, contented, godly, loving person when you're in your 80s and you're writing your Christmas letter?

Well, if you do, then the answer is start now, isn't it? Start in your teens to have these attitudes. Or your 20s, or your 40s, or your 50s, or wherever it is that you are.

[75 : 17] We need to have that single eye, that total focus, that vision on the treasures that are in heaven, all the way through our life, and right to the end.

So I hope you'll join me in making the year 2007, the year of the single eye. Sounds a bit like a Chinese thing, doesn't it? You know, the year of the dog and all the rest of it. Well, what about the year of the single eye?

We all need one another's help if we're going to live like that. I need other people's help, and so do you. But there's no other way to live. Jesus says, you can't serve two masters.

So if we're going to serve the master in the year 2007, let's covenant together to let our eye be single and our vision to be taken up with laying up treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust can destroy, nor thieves break in and steal it away.

Treasures which are sure and certain and will last for eternity. Let's be encouraged that as we labor for the Lord, as Paul says to us, none of your labors are in vain because they're laying up an eternal weight of glory.

[76 : 38] Well, let's pray before we sing and close our service. Lord, be my vision supreme in our hearts.

bid every rival give way and depart. You, my best thought, in the day or in the night, waking or sleeping, your presence are light.

So that, high King of heaven, when the victory is won, we may reach heaven's joys, bright heaven's sun.

Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, still be my vision, the ruler of all. Amen.

Well, let's sing these words together. It's number 732 in the blue hymn books. Lord, be my vision.

Lord, be my vision. for you, I'm so happy.

[78 : 00] For you, I live, so peer in my heart, may every- life, Lord, be my watch, and interview, so, and how.

Then, May every idol Lit Man In my new world, I am a dream and a dream in the Lord.

You my great Father and my great Son, in the living and my great Son.

O be my dear, O be my dear, O be my dear, may my soul, O be my dear, O be my dear, fill out my shelter and fill out my love.

May be me, O be my dear, O God of my heart. May the lighten the glory of the Holy Spirit be praised, fill out my eternity, now and always.

[79 : 52] Hold your treasure to me in the Lord, my King of heaven, the mercy of my God.

I need a man who will be in the Lord, may I be generous, O be my dear, O be my dear, God, O be my dear, O God of my heart.

God, O be my dear, O be my dear, O be my dear, O Lord of my heart.

Well, let's join and say the grace together, shall we? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all.

Amen. And a very happy new year to all of you when it comes. And I hope your house has still got a roof on it tomorrow morning as well. Are we having tea and coffee? We are having tea and coffee.

[81 : 01] Okay, there we are. So, enjoy. Bye.