

Luke Chapter 22

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[0 : 0 0] to take this morning's meeting. We had a lovely drive over the moors and it's great to be with you this morning to share in God's Word. When Peter wrote his first letter he used words that had originally been used about the nation of Israel to describe the position that God's people are in now and he said this about them you are a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light and if you're a Christian this morning that's a description of you part of a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation part of a people belonging to God and one of the reasons for that is that you might declare God's praises to the to other people having been called out of darkness into his wonderful light and we're going to do that now we're going to sing his praises as we sing together come people of the risen king shall we pray together let's pray our gracious heavenly father we come before you this morning in and through the name of the lord jesus christ the risen king of whom we have been singing and we acknowledge gladly before you that it's only in his name and through his redeeming death that we can come before a holy god and hope to be accepted yet we thank you that you have promised us that we can come before your throne and find it to be a throne of grace when we come in jesus name our heavenly father we thank you that we are part of a company worldwide who will be gathering together today to worship you we thank you that even when we were in our beds in the far east our brothers and sisters were already worshipping you and as the evening draws in there will be people further west who will be rising to bring their praise to you we thank you lord that we also join together with all of the heavenly company who constantly praise and worship your name so thank you father for this wonderful opportunity that we have to gather together with our brothers and sisters and with those who seek after you in order to bring you our praise and we pray lord that you would help us to worship you in spirit and in truth as you have called us to do today in all that we do in our singing in our praying in our reading of the scriptures in our listening uh to the scriptures explained lord help us to be blessed by you and to worship you in so doing because we ask it in jesus name amen so we just give thanks for the offertory heavenly father thank you that everything that we have comes from your hand and we thank you that you are such a generous god to us we pray lord that you would use these gifts that we've been able to give this morning and that you would use them for the extension

of your kingdom because we ask it in Jesus name amen well let's come to God's word now and I'd like to read two short passages uh both from the life of Peter first ones in Luke's gospel chapter 22 and verses 31 to 34 so Luke 22 verses 31 to 34 this is just after the last supper and Jesus turns to speak to uh Simon Peter and the disciples together verse 31 of Luke 22 Jesus says Simon Simon Satan has asked to sift you and the you there by the way is plural it's to all of the disciples Satan has asked to sift you as wheat but I have prayed for you singular Simon that your faith may not fail and when you have turned back strengthen your brothers but he replied Lord I'm ready to go with you to prison and to death Jesus answered I tell you Peter before the cock crows today you will deny three times that you know me and as we know that actually did happen our second reading takes place after the crucifixion after Peter's failure and after the resurrection and we're in John's gospel and chapter 21 John 21 from verse 15 when they had finished eating Jesus said to Simon Peter Simon son of John do you truly love me more than these yes Lord he said you know that I love you Jesus said feed my lambs again Jesus said Simon son of John do you truly love me he answered yes Lord you know that I love you Jesus said Jesus said take care of my sheep the third time he said to him Simon son of John do you love me Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time do you love me he said Lord you know all things you know that I love you Jesus said feed my sheep I tell you the truth when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted but when you're old you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God then he said to him follow me may the Lord bless his word to us well those two incidents those two pivotal moments in Peter's life must have been ones that he reflected on and meditated on many many times in the next 30 years or so that he remained alive

and I suppose they must have at times caused him a lot of bitterness and hurt as he looked back on them to look back first of all at that incident where he had said to the Lord Jesus oh I'm ready to go to prison I'm ready to go to death for your sake but Jesus had said to him before tomorrow morning before the cock crows you will have denied me three times Peter so confident in himself so sure of uh his strength indeed rebuking Jesus saying no no no that will never be and he had form for that it wasn't the first time he rebuked Jesus and yet looking back and knowing that Jesus had been absolutely right he had been wrong and he had indeed let down his Lord and master so severely within a short time and then that second incident where Jesus meets him first of all along with the other disciples but then he takes him to be on his own with him and three times just as Simon Peter of course had denied knowing Jesus three times three times Jesus said to him do you love me do you love me Peter and indeed even in John 21 where we heard that Peter was hurt when Jesus had to ask him the third time so as I say when he went when he looked back on those occasions there must have been you know some real hurt in that and yet let me suggest not all hurt there must have also been some tremendous encouragement for him in looking back because Jesus had not cast him away in that first incident Jesus said to Simon yes Satan has asked to sift you like wheat and yes Simon you are going to fail but he said after you have returned after you have turned back so Jesus knew Simon Peter's heart that at the bottom of him he really did love Jesus and Jesus said to him after you have returned back and then of course in the the second incident he kept giving Simon Peter work to do feed my lambs feed my sheep despite his having let the Lord down not only did the Lord forgive him but he reinstated him and still gave him work to do and I don't know about you but those passages are tremendously encouraging to me because the number of times I have let the Lord down and yet he has forgiven me and still given me work to do in his kingdom and he still does that doesn't he for all of us but he said to Simon Peter in that first incident he said once you have turned back he said I want you to strengthen your brothers and the same thought is in the second instance where he says feed the lambs

feed the sheep obviously jesus wasn't telling them stop being a fisherman and turn out to be a shepherd he was talking about people he was talking about the people in the church and he was saying to simon peter i want you to have a work a ministry a feeding of strengthening your brothers and sisters the lamb and the sheep and for the next 30 years peter obeyed those commands those injunctions of the lord jesus christ first of all by being the leader of the church in jerusalem you remember it was peter who first preached the gospel in jerusalem after the time of the resurrection and he very much became the figurehead the head of the church in jerusalem for at least 10 years and during that time he went out on missions beyond jerusalem and judea first of all to samaria and then out to the gentile world we often think of paul as being the apostle of the gentiles and quite rightly he was the one who god used to really spread the word right into europe but don't forget it was peter who first took the word out once he handed over the jerusalem leadership to james the brother of jesus he said he still had a major part to play there he spoke at the council of jerusalem pleading successfully that non-jewish believers like i gather most of us here are this morning that non-jewish believers should be treated as equals to jewish believers and if we look through paul's letters we find mention of peter being in various places in the letter to the galatians we find out we found out that peter spent some time in antioch which was very much the the sending missionary church the great sending missionary church and he also spent some time in corinth and finally he seemed to settle in rome from where he wrote these two letters to believers in asia minor i mentioned turkey in our prayers many of these people he was writing to were in modern day turkey so 30 plus years after being commissioned to strengthen the brethren and to feed the sheep peter is still doing it as we actually finally turn to our text for today which is neither of the passages that i read but is to peter and chapter one to peter and chapter one and verses 12 to 15.

i wanted to say all that just to give you the picture of where peter was when he was writing this letter 30 plus years from the death and resurrection of jesus probably in rome he writes this letter 2 peter 1 verses 12 to 15 and he says this so i will always remind you of these things even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have i think it is right to refresh your memory as long as i live in the tent of this body because i know that i will soon put it aside as our lord jesus christ has made clear to me and i will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things so some of the last words that peter wrote some of the last ways in which he fed the sheep and strengthened the brothers how was he doing it how was he strengthening the brothers and sisters first of all he was doing it by reminding them by reminding them of the tremendously important truths of the christian faith in fact he says to me he says i know that you already know these things but that's not going to stop me reminding you of them because you need that and you saw that two or three times in that paragraph i will always remind you he said in verse 12 um other translations about put the strength of it perhaps over more i i intend the env esv says i intend to remind you uh the order of the authorized version says i will not neglect to remind you you know that this is important to me i will not neglect to remind you you and in verse 13 i think it is right to refresh your memory another translation of that is to stir you up it's a phrase that might have been used at the time to rouse somebody from sleep you know somebody who was dropping off dozing off perhaps dozing off in their christian life and peter says i want to stir you up i want to rouse you again refresh your memory by reminding you of these things so what did he remind them of what he reminded them of the truth i will always remind you of these things even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have it's interesting that today people are often wary about speaking of anything as being the truth as anything that actually has authority that is more important that is more authoritative than anything else instead of which you have to have my truth or your truth but no says peter i'm reminding you all the truth there is such a thing as the truth of the gospel jesus had told peter and the other apostles that the truth would set them free the early jerusalem church when they met around and when they

[19 : 27] broke bread together did they just sort of have a general chat and say ah you know what you thinking of today philip you know what do you think might be a good idea for us to do how do you think we ought to live together no they met around the apostles teaching there was a body of truth to which they agreed and which they lived by paul would relate to write about the word of truth the gospel so peter reminded them of the truth but he also uses a phrase here which talks about the particular aspect of the truth he says i will always remind you of these things in fact that's a little phrase that he uses about five times in the chapter verses 8 9 10 12 15 sometimes translated these things sometimes these qualities it's the same little phrase in the greek constantly telling you i'm going to remind you of these these things what are these things well it's what he's written already what he's written in the first sentence of the letter by the way the first sentence in the greek last 11 verses um when i was teaching english i used to come across an awful lot of people who wrote sentences just as long as that but they didn't usually make quite as much grammatical sense but uh these things that are here already let me just let me just take you through them very briefly because this is basically three sermons in five minutes um the first four verses talk about how god had called them and how he had given them the resources that they needed we often hear don't we these days about organizations and people being under resourced and the problems with that whether it's the nhs whether it's the education system whether it's the the police sometimes as christians we feel that we're seriously under resourced in a world in a country that has largely turned its back on christian things but through peter god here reminds us of the resources that we have he said that these people you've received a precious faith that faith that you have is the equal of the apostles faith he says it's just the same your faith is as precious as my faith you have received a faith as precious as ours perhaps also peter had in mind writing there some at least of them who would not have been jewish people saying to them your faith is just as real as ours and then he said you have received a knowledge of god mentions that several times in the passage he was around about there was some false teachers uh sometimes known as gnostics people who taught that they had to have some uh superior knowledge peter says you've got all the knowledge that you need god has given you the knowledge of himself through the lord jesus christ then he said you've received divine power see that in verse three his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness i'm sure many of you are aware that that word power the

greek word is dunamis from which we get our word dynamite he says you know you've got divine dynamite in your life you have the power of god's holy spirit in your life indeed god himself is uh living in your life you are participating in the divine nature god's holy spirit lives within you and he says you have not only a precious faith but you have great and precious promises from god so he says you have all of these things you have all of these resources to live a godly life even in the midst of the persecution that they were facing which i would suggest is far greater than anything we might feel that we face so he reminds them of these things that they have but then also in verses five to eight he reminds them of the need for continual growth in the christian life it's not enough just to sit back on our laurels and think oh yes we've got all of these resources so we're all right no he says for this very reason make every effort to add to your faith and he talks about various christian qualities and he says i want you to grow in these qualities so you won't be ineffective and unproductive i'm sure all of us have had the uh the experience perhaps of uh teaching or trying to teach a young child how to ride a two-wheeler bike for the first time um it wasn't so long ago we had our grandson out near uh roundtree park by the river there and uh getting used to it and at first they're a bit wary of going forward so they try to almost stay still on the bike and of course you can't make progress if you stay still can you you're wobbling off and what you have to persuade them to do is actually to move forward and then of course once they've got it your problem is trying to catch up with them as he bombs on ahead of you and you remember that you haven't actually taught them how to stop but you need to move forward and it's the same in the christian life we don't stand still we press on we move on otherwise we find ourselves wobbling i guess um when we when we write letters which might be quite rare these days or send emails um you know christians have got sort of uh one or two regular ways in which they sign off uh we either get the blessings or we get in him uh there's one christian uh friend i have which somebody you will know as well you may have received the same like that who always signs off pressing on pressing on in the faith and that's what we need to do and that's what peter said there so i'll keep reminding you of these things i'll keep you reminding you of the need to press on on but then finally in verses 10 to 12 or 10 and 11 he reminds them that if they do press on they can look forward to that heavenly homecoming if you do these things you will never fall and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our lord and savior jesus christ i'll remind you of this that you have that to look forward to but you know was that just peter was that just peter's way of speaking peter's way of ministry

i don't think so i think this idea of reminding the people of god is so important dr martin london jones said this the business of the church and of preaching is not to present us with new and interesting ideas it is rather to go on reminding us of fundamental and eternal truths whether we've been christians a few months or whether we've been christians for decades we need to keep being reminded i guess at that last point the uh welcome into the eternal kingdom was particularly relevant and poignant to peter as he knew that he was about to face death himself soon it's interesting in verse 5 he had uh said to his readers make every effort and now he says about himself in verse 15 i will make every effort and they're exactly the same words that he uses there um there's a lovely little bit in in shakespeare's play hamlet where her ophelia's brother gives her some very well-meaning advice about how she is to live a pure and a chaste life and she rather wryly reminds him that i hope that you are not like some ungracious pastors who tell the congregation the steep way to uh heaven but then go by primrose path themselves well peter says no i'm not like that i've told you to make every effort but i'm making every effort myself and what does he say in this case that he's making every effort to do he says i want to make every effort to see that after my departure that after my death you will still remember these things that's what he wanted to do even after i'm gone he said i want you to be able to remember these things the commentators are really divided about the way in which he was going to do that some people think he was referring to these letters i'm writing you these letters so that you've got a record so you'll remember these things but other people think which is quite interesting that what he might have actually been referring to is what we know as mark's gospel because peter was known to be a if not the major source of mark's gospel the holy spirit of course being the ultimate author of it in the second century a well-known christian called iranius said this after peter and paul's death mark the disciple and interpreter of peter himself handed down to us in writing the substance of peter's preaching so he could have been referring to that but whatever peter said i want to leave something behind after my death i want to leave things behind so that you will remember the things that are essential for your christian growth it's an interesting question isn't it what will we leave behind for our posterity people are always on television or you're getting letters through the post asking you

to make sure that you know you you uh you leave behind plenty of money or your property for your progeny i'm not saying there's anything necessarily wrong in that we are called on in the bible to uh to look after our families that's right but surely more important than that is to leave the knowledge of our faith the example of a christian life lived for those who follow us that we too can leave behind them the knowledge of these things to have made sure that we have shared these with those who follow on from us and that leads me finally to to move on just to look at how peter approached his death at one time it was said that the last taboo was sex i certainly don't think that's the case in our society now it's not a taboo at all to talk about it perhaps it's been replaced somebody has said that the last taboo is death that that's something that we just we don't mention nobody thinks about nobody talks about perhaps uh many of you have heard the sort of fairly uh witty or deflecting comment that woody allen the comedian and filmmaker once made about death he said it's not that i'm afraid to die i just don't want to be there when it happens well that was his comical attitude towards it but he did say something much more serious about it woody allen as far as i know is a total materialist he doesn't believe in anything beyond this life and he said this the fundamental thing behind all motivation and all activity is the constant struggle against annihilation and death it's absolutely stupefying in its terror and it renders anybody's accomplishments meaningless that's how he saw it as a materialist that it was terrifying and that it made any of his achievements any of these films utterly meaningless because in a few years time it will mean nothing i will know absolutely nothing about it the christian's approach is different peter's approach is very different now in john chapter 21 jesus had said to peter something about his coming death he said in a sense it would be a bit of a humiliating experience he said at the minute you know you dress yourself you go where you want but a time will come when somebody else will address you and take you where you don't want to go and it says there that this indicated the way in which peter would die and i don't know whether legend is the right word or not but it's commonly held that peter was actually crucified himself in rome possibly upside down we don't know that for certain but it's quite likely that he was to have a painful and humiliating death and it seems from this paragraph that we have here that jesus has now said to him in some way that this death was going to be soon he says there i know that i will soon put it aside as our lord jesus christ has made clear to me we don't know exactly how jesus did that but peter when he wrote this letter was pretty sure that this death was going to come pretty soon it would

have hardly come as a surprise to him many christians were suffering persecution under nero in rome at that time anyway but knowing what might have been a humiliating death was coming soon how does peter describe it he says it's like taking off a tent like putting aside a tent or or taking off clothes the jewish people had been a nomadic people they were they knew what it was like to uh put up a tent to be in it for a while and then a strike camp and to move on again peter says that's that's what's going to happen to me soon as long as i live in the tent literally the word the tabernacle of my body but he says i'm soon going to be laying it aside paul uses uh exactly the same language himself about death and he also describes it he says in verse 15 after my departure the words exodus after my exodus it's the word that was used on the mount of transfiguration when jesus taught about the coming departure that he would accomplish in jerusalem as i say paul had that uh same idea um uh he he says uh i have fought the good fight i have finished the race i have kept the faith the time has come for my departure so that's how peter looks ahead to his death he says it's like packing up the tent and moving on it's like putting aside the clothing everything it's making it's making it's making it's making a departure rc sproul describes it beautifully like this he did not see himself passing out of existence but moving from one place to another he was about to pack up his tent and go home

[38 : 17] I'm sure many of you heard the words of John Wesley who said about his fellow Methodists he said our people die well and he frequently used to visit people who were in their last days in the congregations around the country partly of course to comfort and encourage them but he said partly it gave him actually tremendous encouragement because he said our people die well because they had lived well and they had walked with God in their lives they were ready for that departure we had somebody in our Gideon's branch in York a chap called Jeff Jay who died fairly recently I think at the age of 100 or 101 and when he was 95 he was the oldest man in the country to be given a pig's valve in his heart he'd been getting pretty breathless he'd been to the doctors he'd been to the hospital and the surgeon had said well look in all other respects respects you're pretty fit as long as you can stand the operation this should help you and he said obviously any operation at your age is pretty risky what do you think?

are you willing to do it? and Jeff just said what have I got to lose? he said you know if the operation goes well he said you know I'll hopefully have a few more years in better health than I am now and if not I know where I'm going do you?

Jeff knew where he was going as Peter did now what one isn't flippant about this the process of dying is not one that most of us or any of us I guess look forward to and of course it wasn't in the in the garden of Eden if Adam and Eve had not sinned it was not inevitable for humanity but it is now the process one doesn't pretend isn't something that might make us have qualms but death itself need not frighten the believer because for Peter and for us if we are resting in Christ then it is to receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of God or may it be that we remember these things that Peter taught the people he was writing to here that we meditate and rest on them frequently in our lives amen to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only

God our saviour be glory majesty power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages now and forevermore amen Áou■ project for the wham is path ser lazy as said well and my way before that Turk is a side trading here as Richard said