

Luke Chapter 10 v 17 - 20

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Yeah, forgetting how many verses there. I'll just open up in prayer. Father, we come before you now and we just want to praise you for who you are.

We look at creation, the majesty of creation, all of nature, all the earth, every other planet is barren in comparison to the earth. But you've lavished the earth with beauty, with mountains, with woods, with forests, with trees, so many things we don't appreciate.

But it all speaks of who you are. Creation speaks your word day by day. So we thank you for your creation.

Thank you for all the good things you give us. We thank you for salvation. We thank you that you've chosen us and that you sent your son to die for us when we were enemies of God.

And we thank you that there's a home for us in the future, that Christ will come. Thank you for all these truths that we can sing about.

[1 : 21] And there's so much to thank you for, Father. We want to say sorry for when we take these things for granted. You've given us so much. So we ask now that you remind us of who you are.

Reveal yourself to us, I pray, in this service. Give us hearts that are joyful, that are thankful to you, that we're called to be a people who declare your praises to the world. So make us those people, we pray.

We pray that you'd speak to us today through your word, through Peter. You lift up our hearts to you, we pray.

In Jesus' name, amen. We're going to have some notices. Richard, let's come up. So the reading today is going to be taken from Ephesians.

So a bit of a break from numbers. Page number 107.2. We're going to look at Ephesians 1. So that's page 107.2.

[2 : 41] No, it's not. And so we're looking at Ephesians 1.

And we'll read the whole chapter. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus, grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. To the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment, to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

[4 : 08] In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him, who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better.

I pray that the eyes of your hearts may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come.

[5 : 48] And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

There's a lot in that passage, isn't there? Thank you, Joel. I asked Joel to read from Ephesians 1 because we will be dipping in there a little later on, but particularly I want us to think about the words of our Lord Jesus.

We read them this morning, but we'll read them again. Luke chapter 10. And I didn't want to go back to numbers just at this time this evening, but I wanted us just to reconnect, as it were, with Luke 10.

We read particularly about Jesus's joy and the joy of the Father and the Holy Spirit and that incredible truth that God is happy, delighted to reveal himself to us.

And we've, well, many of our hymns have been full of joy this evening, but I wanted to pick up on these words from 17 through to 20. Remember, there's 72 disciples returned from their mission.

[7 : 10] Jesus has sent them out and they returned, we're told, with joy. Said, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name. Jesus replied, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

I've given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Let us pray together. Lord, we ask that you would speak to us by your word and your spirit and that, Lord, your word would give light and that we might know you better.

Amen. There's been several stories in the media over the past decades, really several decades, concerning babies being sent home from hospital with the wrong parents.

An unthinkable thing to do. I do not mean that the children were sent home with bad parents and they should have been sent home with better ones, but I do mean that there was a mix-up and the child was given to another set of parents who were not related to in any way.

[8 : 30] Sometimes that error was discovered almost immediately. As soon as the child was handed over to the mother, she would see. At other times, it was months, years, even decades later that anyone realized something was gone wrong.

A child being brought up in a totally different family and never knew their own true parents. Recently, in the news, there was one couple in the Czech Republic, they had their daughter changed for another woman's child because both the mothers shared the same Christian name.

But nobody really knows why there is these mix-ups that take place in, thankfully, not so many in the UK, but in other parts of the world. Now, when we get to Jesus' words, particularly in verse 20, we realize and are thankful that with God, there is never a mix-up concerning those who are going home to heaven.

There's never a problem. There's never a confusion. And Jesus tells us here that in fact, every disciple, not just these disciples, but all those who are his, as we'll see through scripture, their names, your names, are written in heaven.

In one sense, there's a register in heaven where every name of every believer is written. In Revelation, that register is spoken of on a number of occasions.

[10 : 02] Chapter 21, it's called the Lamb's Book of Life. And in chapters 3 and 13, it's simply called the Book of Life. It doesn't just mean those who are alive or who have lived, but it is clearly a register, those who belong to Christ.

Now, we looked at the circumstances this morning about when Jesus speaks to his disciples and tells them these words, but it's a bit strange, isn't it? We thought about the joy of God, the joy of Jesus.

We said there that it wasn't in the mission of the disciples. but that God's joy is found in his wonderful salvation, the revealing of himself, making himself known.

But here, Jesus actually tells the disciples that they are not to rejoice either in the mission. Naturally, they've been out, we don't know for how long, and they've been sharing the good news, the kingdom of God has come near to you, and God, Jesus, in Jesus' name, they've seen people healed, they've seen people delivered of demons, and they come back with a spring in their step, a sense of excitement and rejoicing, and in that moment, Jesus responds in a most, well, peculiar way.

Don't rejoice that the demons submit to you. It may seem surprising to us, startling to us. There's almost a gentle rebuke in what he says.

[11 : 29] You shouldn't be rejoicing in these things. Well, that's strange, isn't it? They were doing what Jesus had told them to do. They were being faithful to Jesus' command.

They had gone out with a certain amount of trepidation because Jesus had warned them there would be some people who will not welcome you, there would be some people who will tell you to clear off, there were some people who will treat you and so on, and they'd gone out as lambs amongst wolves.

And so, when they come back and things seem to have gone relatively well and they hadn't met with a great deal of opposition but they'd seen people rescued and delivered and so on, it's natural that they should feel that way.

It's natural that they should have that joy and rejoicing. Why would Jesus rebuke them? Because he's wise.

because he knows us and because, as always, he speaks into our lives with words of infinite value to help us, to help them as we seek to serve him in proclaiming the good news of the kingdom.

[12 : 46] In one sense, I've been a bit harsh, haven't I? It isn't that Jesus is saying, you must not rejoice, that the demons submit to you, but in one sense he's reminding them that their chief and major source of joy must not be in the things that they've experienced.

And they're for a very obvious reason, of course. Our experiences in life from day to day vary greatly. Like the English weather, they're completely changeable and unpredictable.

If our experiences in life, including the blessings of seeing God at work in other people's lives as well as our own, if they are the only foundation for our joy, our happiness, what will we be like when either those times of blessing pass or we face difficulties and discouragements?

Well, if we are only joyful when things are going well, it's pretty obvious that we shall be miserable when things are going, in our view, badly.

We'll be on a constant roller coaster of emotions like many people that we meet. Up one day, down the next. Unstable, insecure, lacking confidence and assurance.

[14 : 15] And there are some people sadly like that. And there are some Christians sadly like that as well. And so what's the answer? Well, of course, we could take the view of some people, stoical people, who would say, well, of course, the best thing to do is always expect the worst.

If you always expect the worst, then you'll never be disappointed, will you? Because if things go well, that's extra, isn't it? But if you always expect that things will be difficult and they're difficult, well, it's just as you predicted.

Be an eeyore sort of a person. No, that's not what Jesus wants us to be at all. He wants us to rejoice. He wants us to have a joy which is lasting and real, but a joy that is unchanging.

A joy that isn't affected by or blown here or there by the troubles and the difficulties of life. He wants us to build our joy on a foundation of rock, not of shifting sand.

And similarly, he does not want us to be overwhelmed, to be broken down, to be discouraged because spirits are not subject to us.

[15 : 26] Not to be overwhelmed and to be perhaps beating ourselves up because souls aren't saved every week. The reality that we find all the way through Scripture, all the way through church history, the reality of our lives as well is this, following Christ is not easy.

Never has been. There's never been a time. It's no good you saying, oh, I wish I was living in the days of the apostles. Oh, really? James put to the sword, Stephen stoned to death? You'd really like to be there?

Oh, I wish I was living in the days of the Reformation with Luther and all the wonderful things were happening. Oh, what about the others who were burned to death at the stake? You really want to be around then? Or in the days of Spurgeon in the preaching in London and many were converted?

So on and so forth. Dear friends, there's never ever been an easy time to be a Christian and it's not an easy time now and it never has been. That's why Jesus says to them, go, I'm sending you out like lambs among wolves.

We live in a vicious society. That's why he says to you, when you come to a town and they do not welcome you, that happens and it's going to happen and anyone who lives as a believer in this world will always struggle.

[16 : 42] But none of these things are to rob us of our joy. None of the ups and downs, the trials, the difficulties are to stop us rejoicing in something which is absolutely certain, unchangeable, unaffected, secure, a realization that will give us joy in this world whatever comes our way.

What is that joy to rest upon? What is it the way to rejoice in that doesn't change? Here it is, verse 20. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. What does that mean?

Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. And again, as I've said before, it's not simply to the disciples of his day but to every disciple, every follower of Jesus that these things are true to every Christian here this evening, everyone who is born again of the Spirit.

What does it mean? I think it means three things. First of all, that your names are written in heaven. Your names are written in heaven.

Notice the tense. Not that they will be written in heaven or they are yet to be written in heaven or I hope they will be in heaven but they are written in heaven. I wonder, those of you who are parents or grandparents, when you knew there was a baby on the way, did you begin writing out the list of baby names and then have an argument with your spouse about what name it would be?

[18 : 22] well, my grandmother's aunt was called Beatrice. Oh dear, that's one of the princesses, isn't it? I better not use that name. That's such a lovely name for our family.

But something like that, some sort of a strange name. I'm not calling my child Beatrice or who is it? Somebody that I knew and all the girls in the family were called, I was going to say Hezbollah but it's not Hezbollah.

It's some really Old Testament name. And her mother was told, right, you're having a daughter, you've got to name her after the family name. She said, I'm not naming my child but she's going to be called Sheila, her name was.

Anyway, you write out the list, you write out the names but again, you're not sure, will it be a boy, will it be a girl? But you have some idea, don't you? When the child is on the way.

When did God know your name? Did he know your name when your parents named you or when you were christened or baptized or whatever it was that happened to you? No, the Bible makes it clear that your name was known to God and written in the book of life from the creation of the world.

[19 : 33] That's Revelation chapter 17 and verse 8 where the angel is speaking to John and telling her about those whose names weren't written in the book, the Lamb's book of life from the creation of the world.

There are those that names are written there and it's not only that God knew about you and me and every single person who's ever lived, but wonderfully for those who are believers, he chose to put our names in this Lamb's book of life before the creation of the world.

1 Peter in chapter 1, you have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. He chose to place your name and mine dear believer in the register of heaven as those that he would graciously, wonderfully save one day and bring into a relationship with himself and take home to heaven.

That's what we read from Ephesians 1. I hope you noticed as we read through how Paul seems to stress this reality again and again and again, doesn't he? Verse 4, for he chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

In love he predestined us, it's much the same thing, for adoption to sonship. Verse 11, in him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in accordance with the purpose of his will.

[20 : 59] It's a mystery, but it's a wonderful mystery. God chose you before the world was made, before you were born, before you were a twinkle in your father's eye, God knew you and chose to save you.

Chose that you should be in Christ, included in him. Chose that you should be saved. Why would he do that? Why did God choose you?

Why did he choose me? Well, without being facetious, God only knows. It can't have been because we did something good, isn't it?

You know, when you're a child at school and there's a team and all the kids are lined up and you're going to play football. Boys did this, girls probably did something similar and they pick all the, you pick first.

They always pick the good ones who they've seen playing before and they're playing really well, haven't they? They think, I'm going to get Bill because he's a brilliant goal scorer. But we hadn't done anything to show ourselves deserving or worthy of our being chosen for God's family.

[22 : 16] We'd not done right or wrong, but he wrote our names in that Lamb's Book of Life even before that. We can only put this down to what we find here in Scripture, the reality that God's love for us is an unconditional love, a predestining, choosing love to save and rescue us who could never deserve it.

Do you notice that? He chose us in him, verse 4, before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight in love. Some of the old translations include that as part of verse 4.

Others make it a new sentence into verse 5. But in the end, there is only one explanation why you are saved this evening, one explanation why your name was written in heaven before the world was made.

It is the love of God. Unconditional, undeserved, free love. Our hope, our confidence in the love of God, in the forgiveness of our sins, which he goes on to talk about, is assured because God has put it in writing.

He hasn't just said it, he hasn't just hinted at it, he's put it in writing, in heaven. So dear friends, your name is written in heaven.

[23 : 43] Your names are written in heaven. What else do we recognize from that? Well, clearly, Jesus is talking not only about a past event, but a present reality. Our names, your names, are written in heaven today.

As Jesus was speaking to them. Your name is known in heaven. We're registered there even before we arrive.

We're citizens of heaven, in fact. Paul writes to Philippians in chapter 3, verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven.

We eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. In one sense, your spot's reserved. I like to pull certain people's legs in the church and say, you know, that space just outside the lounge, the car parking space.

I think there should be a sign that says Peter Robinson there, reserved for the pastor, don't you? I think he deserves that sort of, you know, recognition. No, I don't.

[24 : 55] But that's what you do, don't you? We went and had a meal yesterday and today and phoned ahead to reserve a table and so they put in the register and they reserved for the Robinsons or whatever it may be.

it's set apart, nobody else can go and sit there. Perhaps you've done that once you've gone to a restaurant, that's a great table by the window, you've gone and sat there, oh, they put reserved or you think, oh, I'll move it, I'll put it on that table and I'll sit down and then they come and say, excuse me, you can't sit there, that's reserved.

Oh, nobody can take your place in heaven because it's reserved for you and your name's written there now, today.

You're a citizen of heaven now. You belong to heaven now, not just when you get there. Again, you go on holiday, don't you, and you travel to a foreign country and you go and see the sights and you go and get your money changed into the money, eat the food, you may even be able to speak a little bit of the language, but you don't cease to be a British citizen.

You don't suddenly become a citizen of that country because you're there, you're just there temporarily, you're passing through, your home is not there, your home is in Britain.

[26 : 06] And dear friend, as a Christian living in this world, you are firstly and foremostly a citizen of heaven. Now yes, we should pray for the government of our land and we should be concerned about our country and we should be those who are faithful to see the building up of our nation, but ultimately, dear friends, we are firstly citizens of heaven, not citizens of the United Kingdom or Europe or whatever.

In fact, the reality the Bible teaches us is that we are pilgrims, or the old word sojourners. We're passing through in Peter's letter to the Christians who had been dispersed, he says, I urge you as foreigners and exiles in the world.

Isn't one of the problems that we often have as Christians is that we begin to think that we are here forever. And so we begin to build up a kingdom for ourselves in this world, we begin to accumulate treasures in this world, and begin to see and think this is all there is, I'm living for this world.

But this world is passing, it's transitory, not only because of the fact that you and I must die one day, but also because of the fact that the Bible tells us that this world in which we live will be rolled up like a scroll and chucked into the fire.

There's going to be a new heavens and a new earth, and we belong to them. It must be a terrible thing to be a refugee.

[27 : 32] We heard about some of them when the goulers were here the other week from Nigeria. And I'm sure that in the hearts of those people who have had to flee their country, perhaps they've had to leave Syria to go to another country, Turkey or something else, I know that in their hearts as they're living in those tents in that refugee camp, without a doubt, they want to go home.

They've been in Syria for months or years, but they're just in a tent in a refugee camp. They're not saying, oh, this is lovely here, or I hope we can stay here. Of course they're not.

They're going, I just want to go home. I just want to get back to where I belong. Dear friends, you and I are the same. We're too long for heaven, our home.

Yes, we're to live in this world and we're to serve Christ in this world and we're to not, as it were, try and rush out of it too soon. But dear friends, this is not our home. Our real home is where our heavenly father is.

Our real home is where our family are. It's from heaven that God came in the form of our Lord Jesus Christ to save and rescue us.

[28 : 42] It's from heaven that he will come again to take us to be with him for all eternity. Heaven is the center of the universe and should be the center of our lives.

Because your name is written in heaven now. If you were to die this night, then to heaven you would go. Didn't Jesus make that wonderful promise in John 14 to the disciples as they're heartbroken and they're concerned about him leaving them?

My father's house has many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may also be where I am.

That's the promise, isn't it? It means something else as well. It means not only dear friends that our names are written in heaven and we recognize and rejoice in and thank God that he chose to save us before the world was made and that he put our names, we were known, you were known, you're not what your parents said about you, no matter what other people said about you, no matter what your own thoughts about yourself, you're not a mistake, you're not an accident, you're not in this world just by chance, it's not because of anything else except that it was God's will and purpose that you should be here and God's will and purpose that he should save you.

And not only is it the case as well dear friends that our citizenship is in heaven which means that we are not to live as if this world is the end, the all in all, but we're to live as those who are on a journey and we're heading somewhere, we're heading home.

[30 : 23] But there's one more thing here. Because our names are written in heaven, they shall forever be written in heaven. Revelation chapter 3 verse 5, Jesus promises those who are his, I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life.

God put your name in that book and only God can take your name out of that book and he definitely will not. Because God does not change his mind. He doesn't think, oh well I fancy saving that person but now I want to change my mind.

I realize they're not as nice as I thought they were. We all make mistakes like that don't we? We would write somebody for a meal and think that's a very nice friendly person, I've only just met them and I'm going to invite them to come to my house and oh my goodness.

They like steam trains and that's all they want to talk about all the time is steam trains. Sorry John. Or something else which they also may find really exciting but you don't.

God doesn't change his mind. God doesn't have regrets. He has no regrets about saving you. He has no regrets about putting your name in the Lamb's book of life for the world was made. He has no regrets about preparing a place for you in heaven and reserving a home for you in heaven.

[31 : 48] He never will and he's never ever going to take your name out of that book of life and no one else can not even the devil. Strange isn't it what Jesus says isn't it?

Verse 18. I'm not going to make a big thing of it. Maybe you've heard it preached on before. I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I've given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions to overcome all the power of the enemy.

Nothing will harm you. Now that is not a promise that they will never be martyred because a lot of them were martyred. It doesn't mean that things aren't going to be difficult or hard.

What he's talking about is the preservation of that person for salvation and for heaven. And I think when he talks about snakes and scorpions he's talking about the power of the enemy.

He's talking about how the devil can bite us at times like a snake and he can sting us at times like a scorpion but he can never take away our salvation. When did Jesus see Satan fall like lightning there's all sorts of thoughts.

[32 : 50] My thought is this he saw him fall like lightning when on the cross he defeated him. It was absolutely certain remember he's set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Those who have been with us in Luke he's determined to go to Jerusalem he's determined to die because there he will conquer once and for all the very power of Satan. Yes he's not dead yet.

Yes he's still writhing into that fatal blow but he has no power over you dear saint. Your name is written in unerasable ink.

Written in the blood of the Lord Jesus. There's a wonderful hymn that we sing from time to time and this is one line. My name from the palms of his hands eternity will not erase.

Impressed on his heart it remains in marks of indelible grace. The register of heaven is not like any other book in the world.

[33 : 53] It's not subject to correction. Not subject to addition. It cannot be altered because God himself is unchanging as the theologians call it because he is immutable then his work is immutable and unchangeable.

His choice and his salvation. Our names your names and mine shall forever be written in heaven because we shall forever be in heaven too. Let me ask you.

Jesus spoke these things to these disciples. These believers had gone out like lambs amongst wolves.

Does such confidence give us reason to rejoice when God blesses our work and we witness his power in the lives of those around about us?

Yes it does. Of course it does. Does this truth give us reason to rejoice when times are hard? When men reject us and our message of God and his love in Christ?

[35 : 02] Yes it does. Of course. Because it doesn't change. And so the question really at the end of all of this is simply this. Do you know that your name is written in heaven?

Do you know that? Do you have that assurance as we sang before? Blessed assurance. Jesus is mine. Do you have that assurance? On what basis is your assurance? Well I've tried to live a good life.

No good. I go to church every week. No good. I read my Bible. No good. Prayed a prayer 30 years ago. No good. What's your assurance that your name is written in heaven?

How can you be sure? How can you know? That your name is written in heaven? Because God has said it. But perhaps there's some of us even here this evening who don't have that assurance.

That the name is written in heaven. Perhaps there's some of us who know that our names aren't or think that our names aren't. Let me ask you this.

[36 : 13] Have you heard the voice of Jesus speaking to you? Are you calling you? Have you put your faith in him as your Lord and Savior? Have you given him your sins at the cross?

And do you love him even though you know your love is weak and imperfect? And are you longing for that day when you will see him as he is in all his splendor and glory?

And do you long to be with him? Then be sure of this. Your name is written in heaven. Close with these words of Jesus.

They're truly the words that we can stand upon. John chapter 10. My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father who's given them to me is greater than all.

[37 : 18] No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. If you're in the hand of the Father, then you're safe as safe can be.

Let's sing. wszyscy work in the battle.

Let's sing. Let's sing. Let's sing. Let's sing. Let's sing. Let's sing.

CHOIR SINGS The 1500 Psalm To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his presence in glory without fault and with great joy to the only wise God, our Savior.

Be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all of time, now, tomorrow and forevermore.

[39 : 57] Amen.