

## **Aughnacloy, Ballymagrane, Clogherney & Sixmilecross Presbyterian Churches**

Rev. Roger McElnea  
52 Caledon Road, Aughnacloy  
BT696HX  
H 02885557500  
M 07738763747

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rmcelnea@hotmail.co.uk

**Psalm 46 v10-11** *"Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

Dear Friends

As your minister, it is a great privilege that I have in bringing this weekly devotion to you. We have some great news this week! The Northern Ireland Executive have relaxed the Coronavirus restriction on the use of Churches from tomorrow 29<sup>th</sup> June. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that from Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July our Aughnacloy congregation will return to their meeting house at 11am and, our Ballymagrane congregation will meet at 12 noon for Public Worship. In order to, facilitate our return to public worship, sanitising stations will be in place at the entrance; 2-meter social distance rules will be adhered to at all times; and families/individuals will be allocated a seat on arrival, in order to, maximise siting capacity.

We are also planning for shorter service times (30-40 minutes) over the summer period as we implement these changes, in order that we all can grow in confidence with the measures in place. These arrangements will be reviewed regularly.

We, the Kirk Sessions, recognise, that not everyone will feel confident enough to gather in a worship situation at present, therefore, we plan to continue recording one of the weekly services and, provide it on YouTube later that afternoon.

Our theme today is 'Salvation, Saviour'. **Psalm 34** *I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. Fear the Lord, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry; but face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to blot out their name from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken. Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. The Lord will rescue his servants; no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.*

**Prayer** - Lord God of all creation, as we come together in our own special places today, we thank you for all of your many blessings towards us your people. We prayer that as we worship you, your spirit will be among us, encouraging us by the reading of your inspired word and meditations on it. Clam our restless hearts and minds for this time that we have together. Refresh us O Lord in body mind and spirit, equip us for the days which lie ahead, help us to acknowledge our real value in you for you love us so much that you have given your precious gift your son to remove the consequences of our sin in order that we may join with you in your heaven when you call.

Equip us Lord, for these day of easing restrictions, help us Lord to be mindful of the many folk in our communities who have been shielding, as they begin the journey towards a new normality, that, they have confidence in the process and the plans that are in place for the safety of us all.

Surround us Lord, with your love and presence drawing our friends and neighbours to your loving Salvation through trusting faith in Jesus Christ your only Son. In whose name we pray. **Amen.**

You may have been asked a question similar to this; "Do you want God's blessing in your life?" On the surface, it sounds straight forward. Of course, I want God's blessing in my life! Answering yes to that question commits you to an often-difficult way of life. God does not bless those that ignore His commandments and live to please themselves. He blesses those that fear Him and walk in His ways, turning from their sins. Now, do you really want God's blessing in your life?

In Psalm 34 we have an example of a man, 'David' who did. In spite of his many failures and sometimes flagrant sins, he kept coming back to the Lord, repenting of his sins, and seeking God as his chief joy and treasure. David wasn't just, as so many do, trying to milk God for His blessings, but continuing to live without the responsibility of living a life in tune with God. Rather, David saw God Himself as the supreme blessing. To enjoy God and His blessings, seek Him for salvation, fear Him, and walk in His ways. The psalm comes out of an embarrassing incident in David's life. He was running from King Saul, who was seeking to kill him. We can find it recorded in **1 Samuel 21:10-15**. And so by his deception, David was enabled to escape. However, his acting like a madman had dishonoured God in front of these pagans. He then wrote this psalm, praising God for his deliverance and denouncing deception. *Psalm 34:13 keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.*

What's going on here? It seems that in reflecting back later on this close escape from death, David realized that in spite of his failure, God had been gracious in rescuing him anyway. This Psalm broadly falls into two sections v1-10 "Rejoice with me," v11-22 "Learn with me." The first being David's testimony the second is his teaching.

**Rejoice with me!** Notice the results that come when we truly praise the Lord continually. Praise sanctifies our lives at all times, no matter how difficult the situation is. The Lord Jesus sang before He went to Calvary, **Matthew 26:30**. Paul and Silas praised the Lord in prison when their bodies hurt. **Acts 16:25**

The Lord really saves keeps and satisfies us as we come to Him. It's interesting to notice that we aren't saved from trouble. Sometimes when we trust the Lord and pray, He saves us from troubles. But here David says, "He saved me out of troubles." He also keeps. "The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him and delivers them" (v. 7). Verse 8 says that the Lord also satisfies: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" Some of the experiences of life taste sour. Sometimes the cup that is handed to us is not one of sweetness but of bitterness. Our Lord Jesus had to drink a bitter cup. Do you know what makes the bitter cup satisfying and sweet? It's "tasting" the Lord in it. When you taste the Lord in the experiences of life, they become sweet in Him. Have you "tasted" the Lord and found that He satisfies? Allow the Lord to get close enough so that you can 'taste and see that He is good.' This ought to be much more than a casual sampling of God.

**2. Learn with me!** V11-22 - The lessons of this second part of the Psalm are chiefly that the true good is to be in harmony with God. Our trials should drive us to the end of ourselves so that we seek the Lord for salvation as we fear Him and learn to walk in His ways. How often has someone said to you, "Have a good day"? That's a nice statement, but what does it mean? When you review the day's activities before you go to bed, how do you know whether the day was good or bad? When Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, that was a bad day. But God turned it into good for him. When Potiphar's wife lied about Joseph and had him put into prison, it was a bad day. But God turned that into good for him also. You see, we don't always know what a good day is. However, we can make our days good if we follow the lesson David learnt in this Psalm.

First, control your tongue. V13 *keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies*. So, keep your tongue under control. Second, v14 *Turn from evil and do good*; If you want to have a good day, do good. If you sow the seeds of goodness, you'll reap the harvest of goodness. Third, v14 .... *seek peace and pursue it*. We have got to do more than simply seek our peace with God, we have got to pursue it with our lives, do something about it. These closing verses indicate the great divide between those whom God redeems and those whom God will condemn.

*Psalm 34:21 Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. <sup>22</sup> The LORD redeems his servants; no-one will be condemned who takes refuge in him. Those are the only options! Make sure that you've taken refuge in Jesus Christ!*