

The Lord's Promises to Zion

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 28 November 2021

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[0 : 0 0] a warm welcome to our service this morning a very special welcome to any who may be visiting with us on this occasion we are going to begin our service singing to god's praise from psalm 48 psalm 48 and at the beginning of the psalm singing four stanzas from the beginning great is the lord and greatly he is to be praised still within the city of our god upon his holy hill mount sion stands most beautiful the joy of all the land the city of the mighty king on her north side does stand the lord within her palaces is for a refuge known for lo the kings that gathered where together i have gone but when they did behold the same they wondering would not stay but being troubled at the sight they thence did haste away these four stanzas from psalm 48 great is the lord and greatly he is to be praised still the lord and greatly he is to be praised still the lord and greatly he is to be praised still he is to be praised still the lord and great is the lord and greatly he is to be praised still the lord and greatly he is to be praised still within the city of our god upon his holy hill upon his holy hill

Holy Spirit My triumph stands for you people the joy of all the land the city all the mighty king on the north shining shine the Lord with never all it is not yet his own for all the kings of the who ever might have gone and they hold the shes they would not see a king of the night and dead is away let's join together in prayer let's pray gracious God as we come before you in worship we pray that you would would mercy fully undertake for us because we are creatures of the dust who have embraced a life of sinfulness unlike our first parents as created who were created in the image of their God possessing all the faculties that human nature could possibly possess that were divine as the God who created them was able to bestow them upon them but in the fall in the embracing of sin in the pursuit of disobedience our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created by sinning against God and so lost the ability to enjoy unbridled access to the unbridled access to the throne room of heaven and the ability to worship that God who created them without their worship showing the extent of their fallenness and that pursues us to this day that follows us to this day no matter how much we are inclined to worship God as we are called to do we will always come short even the most holy whoever that person may be we can scan the pages of scripture

where we are faced confronted with many who possess that accolade that they knew the Lord and that they served the Lord and that they are listed amongst those who have the name that they are God's chosen people and yet in their lives they revealed that sinfulness they demonstrated their inability to retain even outwardly that perfection which many would demand of them but we give thanks that you have not left it to us to you have not left it to us to gain access into your presence by virtue of our holiness but that you have lived opened out to us and you are a living way through Christ the Lord and upon his perfect obedience we rest today thankful that even though we are required to that even though we are required to endeavor to the full extent of our ability to live out our life as those who would serve the Lord and obey the Lord and love the Lord yet when we fail to do so there is one upon whose perfections we can rely we give thanks that we have met in his name today and we pray that you would bless us together each one with their needs whatever they may be according to these needs we pray that you would meet us and visit us mercy fully from the youngest to the oldest we would ask that you would do for us what no other can we pray that you would bless our homes our families our loved ones those present those who can't be with us for whatever reason we would ask Lord that you would do amongst us your own work thankful that you have worked and there is none who can stay your hand hitherto the Lord has helped us your servant said and when he looked upon his life in retrospect he was able to contemplate times times in his experience when he could determine the extent of your mercy and each one of us here whoever we may be whether we choose to do so or not we could look back upon our lives from the moment of our birth even when we did not possess the ability to do anything for ourselves yet we were encircled with the grace and the goodness of God we give thanks for any way in which some here can speak of that being spared in illness and in sickness and families being sustained through that time even some today who can think of ways in which the Lord is a portion in ways that no other person is we pray that you would remember those house-filled or hospitalised especially those of our number who are unwell we pray bring them into your presence on the shoulders of prayer and ask that you would multiply your graces towards them remember the grieving and the sorrowful amongst us as you have spoken to us in recent times so we pray for those that have been touched in the intimacy of the family circle that you would bind up their wounds and heal their hurts

and lend to them a sight of the mercies that are bound towards us in Christ's name and we pray for your blessing to be on a wider community upon our nation upon the close to governance as we once again are reminded of the fragility of our peace when we hear of different forms of Covid making inroads into our nation and the nations of the earth we are in your hands and we give thanks for the deliverances that we have enjoyed that we have enjoyed the two and we pray that you would get again be the means by which such deliverance is received we pray for those affected by it and ask that you would remember those who are sorrowful at the extent of the damage drawn to their own lives and their own families remember the nations of the earth even such nations as are at war at the present we are horrified in this land of plenty where very few of us ever have to go without but we see malnourished infants and we see them crying out for drink or for food and there are so many evidences within these very nations that resources are squandered in ways where weapons of war are chosen over against the provision that is made for the weak and the infirm there is great iniquity in this world of ours yet we give thanks that you are able to triumph over it at the last continue to watch over us this day we pray in this special service where the sacrament of baptism is to be observed with us throughout and mercy for our sins in Jesus name

Amen I'm going to read from the scriptures of the Old Testament and we're reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah chapter 62. Isaiah chapter 62 read the whole chapter for Zion's sake will I not hold my peace and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth and the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness and all kings thy glory and thou shalt be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord the royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate but thou shalt be called Hephzibah and thy land Beulah for the Lord delighteth in thee and thy land shall be married for as a young man marryeth a virgin so shall thy sons marry thee and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

[13 : 35] I have said watchmen upon thy walls O Jerusalem which shall never hold their peace day or night ye that make mention of the Lord keep no silence and give him no rest till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a place in the earth the Lord hath sworn by his right hand and by the arm of his strength surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine for the which thou hast laboured but they that have gathered it shall eat it and praise the Lord and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness go through go through the gates prepare ye the way of the people cast up cast up the highway gather out the stones lift up a standard for the people behold the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world say ye to the daughter of Zion behold thy salvation cometh behold his reward is with him and his work before him and they shall call them the holy people redeemed of the Lord and thou shalt be called sought out a city not forsaken.

Amen and may the Lord add his blessing to a reading of his word and to his name be the praise. God is saying go to sing from Psalm 132. Psalm 132 verse 11. Verse 11 the Lord in truth to David's way he will not turn from it. I of thy body's fruit will make upon thy throne to sit my covenant if thy sons will keep and laws to them make known their children then shall also sit forever on thy throne for God of Zion hath me choice there he desires to dwell this is my rest here still I'll stay for I do like it well her food I'll greatly bless her poor with bread will satisfy her priests I'll cloth with health her saints shall shout forth joyfully and so on these four stanzas to God's praise.

Psalm 132 from verse 11 the Lord in truth to David's way he will not turn from it the Lord in truth to David's way he will not turn from it he will not turn from it my Father in prayer I can you hang on you His one during the rain his Feast will be now upon my Lord you see My tongue undefined sons will be, I'll go to them with no.

Their children and childless hosts, forever on thy throne.

For God of Zion I rejoice, there he desires to dwell.

[17 : 51] This is my grand, here still I stay, for thy good life you am.

Our food I give thee, bless our birth, when bread will satisfy.

Our praise and glory, help our saints, treasure for the joy of glory.

I would like now for a short while to turn with you to the passage that we read in the Old Testament Scriptures, the prophet Isaiah chapter 62.

Reading at the beginning. For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest. And to the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

[19 : 26] And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory, and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.

and so on. I am going to refer to the whole of the chapter, but we can try and frame a few thoughts on the opening verses in particular.

And I suppose we can begin with a couple of questions that may occur to you when you read these verses.

First of all there is a question about who is it that we have in verse 1 that is not going to hold this peace, and that is not going to rest.

I will not hold my peace, and I will not rest. So it's a straightforward question. Who is it? Secondly, what is this Zion that is at the heart of his promises?

[20 : 41] For Zion's sake, he says, will I not hold my peace? And Zion is at the heart of what he has to say. So we need to ask the question, who, what, or where is Zion?

So how can we answer that question? The third thing, I suppose, is the emphasis that is placed by this I upon what he is going to do and what he is not going to be deflected from doing.

So he is making a promise, or promises, and these promises are not going to be allowed to fall.

And only because of who is making the promises can we say that. So the I of the first verse, there are three possibilities that are for the main part suggested.

The first possibility is that the person who is speaking there would be the prophet Isaiah.

[22 : 02] And that would be a reasonable answer to give. The role of the prophet is to proclaim God's word. And God has given him this task to do, to speak on behalf of God and to declare the will of God to the people.

So it's quite possible that the prophet may say this, that because of the role that he has, the task that God has given him, he is not going to be deflected from it.

I will not hold my peace. I will not rest. I will not rest. And if you read through the prophecy of Isaiah, the prophet clearly fits the bill.

He is someone who is dedicated to this role or calling that God has given to him. The second possibility is that it is God himself who is speaking.

And the first two verses would allow you to come to that understanding. That it is Yahweh or God, God the Father who is speaking here.

[23 : 13] But that, while it is a possibility for the first two verses, when you read through the chapter, some of what is said becomes almost redundant.

Because God is speaking of himself in ways that you would not really expect him to speak of himself. So the third possibility is that the person who is not going to hold his peace is the person of the Messiah.

The person of the Saviour of Zion. If you take into consideration the whole of the context of the chapter, I think you could quite comfortably sit with that argument.

But if you take into consideration the whole of the context of the chapter upon chapter.

The role of the prophet is to speak much about God's provision for a fallen world. In particular as that provision points us in the direction of the person of the Messiah, the Anointed One.

[24 : 46] The Coming One. The One that the world is anticipating. And the prophet is wanting us to believe.

The Second question we have here has to do with what the Messiah is going to do.

And he says, for Zion's sake, I will not hold my peace. For Jerusalem's sake, I will not rest. Now, Zion is a word that we are all familiar with.

If we are familiar with the scripture at all, we come across it very often. In particular we come across it in the singing of the Psalms. And the Psalms that we are singing today, both of these Psalms make mention of Zion.

Zion. But what is Zion? Who is Zion? Where is Zion? Where is Zion? And historically, Zion is the name given to a place that was on the borders between Judah and Israel.

[26 : 16] Zion. And it describes a city that was built upon that border. A city that belonged to the Jebusites. And King David took that city to be his own.

Because it was a fortified city. A city that was ideally suited in times of war. And he made it his capital. And he made it his chosen place of safety.

So geographically, we know where it is. Historically, we know the place it occupied. And as history develops, the name given to it is at times given to the city of Jerusalem, which was David's city.

Sometimes it extends beyond the boundaries of the actual city itself. Which if you think of it like this, I'm not sure how accurate my picture is, the picture I have in my mind.

But if you think about Glasgow, the city. And then you think about Greater Glasgow. The parts round about the city. There's various smaller towns around Greater Glasgow.

[27 : 39] Or part of Greater Glasgow, which have the name Glasgow. So, like Zion, was the city built upon the rock.

A fortress. A place that was associated with David the king. It also extended beyond the limited boundary of that city.

To take in the extended environs. It also has this image in the mind of the people. Not just the place where David appointed his throne to be sat.

It was also the place that the Ark of the Covenant. Which was identified as the focal point of the worship of God's people. And this came to be situated in Jerusalem.

In Zion. And with the passage of time, the place, the city, the fortress, the capital, came to be known as God's city.

[28 : 48] Where God's people were. So, you've got this name which is full of meaning. Full of purpose, if you like.

In the sense in which it describes to us what God means to his people. I'll just give you an example.

In chapter 52 of this prophecy. Awake, awake. Put on thy strength, O Zion. Now, you wouldn't say that to a city.

You wouldn't say that to a building. But that's what he says. He says. Put on thy strength, O Zion. Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city.

For henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust. Arise and sit down, O Jerusalem. Loose thyself from the bands of thy name, O captive daughter of Zion.

[29 : 54] And so on. Read that chapter for yourself. It's descriptive of every bit as much a people as it is a building or buildings.

So what we have here in Zion is the focus of God's promises as they are in Christ Jesus the Messiah. And the first promise, and we're just limiting it to this, there's much more here, I suppose, than we have time to go into.

The first promise is a promise concerning the ongoing prayers of the Messiah, the mediator of God's people. There is prayer offered by him on their behalf.

That prayer is a persistent prayer. It's ongoing. It never ceases. It will not relent. It will not be deflected. The prayer is ongoing because of the one who is offering the prayer.

This mediator between God and man. And what he is praying for is the eternal rest of his people. So that as he prays, he prays constantly, and he prays with a purpose, and that purpose is always before him until that purpose is realized.

[31 : 19] And the day for that purpose being realized has not yet happened. It is still to be fulfilled. Now one thing that we can say, and I'm limited because I'm aware of the time and the limited time that we have.

There are several promises that we have within the prophecy of Isaiah. And I'm limited to Isaiah for simplicity's sake. Isaiah was a servant of God who was looking forward with anticipation to God's promise to the world of a Savior.

So in chapter 7, just for example, we read there of God's promise to Israel of one who would come, who would bear identifiable features that would mark him out to the people who are waiting for him.

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel.

Brother and money he shall eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. And so on. A promise given to the world long before the birth of Christ, identifying for those who waited for him.

[32 : 51] He may know to be a child who waited for him. He may know to be a person, but it may be a sign of his name. Then the next passage we have, again, a promise.

Every one of you here, I'm sure, recognizes. Coming up to Christmastime, coming up to the time where the birth of Jesus is celebrated. Many of these verses are associated with the birth of Jesus.

of Jesus. Unto us a child is born, and to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it, to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth and forever. The seal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

One more promise. All of these are in Isaiah. All of these concern the coming Messiah. All of these follow the promise of God concerning the giving of the Messiah. There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord. And so on. Now what these promises tell us about the coming one, the one that they're waiting for is that he will be a king and a priest over his own household. And he will be recognized by Israel as that one who is coming. According to Professor Funless in the opening words of chapter 63, chapter 63, who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bosra? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength, I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Again, a word of promise. And Professor Funless was a professor in the Free Church

[35 : 13] College at one point. He says, the king is robed in his priestly garment when he raises the scepter of his dominion over his brother. In that priesthood he offers a mediation by which men are presented to God and God to men, and no other medium for man's approach to God can ever be found that is suitable for man and acceptable to God. I'm sorry if this appears to you to be prolonged and convoluted and difficult to understand. But the focus I want you to understand falls upon a God who promises, a God who provides according to his promise, a mediator, a priest after the order of Melchisede, someone who would stand between him who is God and men who are in the world who are in their sin, who can't approach God without someone being between them and God. And that someone is Christ, and God promises this person who is going to come.

And that promise is never going to be nullified. And when that one who is promised comes, he himself will fulfill the promises and will reveal still further more promises as they devolve upon the people for whom these promises have been made. The people of God. The thing that I want to emphasize is this, the mediator is praying for his church, and he will go on praying for his church regardless of how it may appear to us.

The church of Christ as we see it may appear to be on the back foot. Our experience of it, our thinking of how it's regulated and how it's its continuance is under threat to our way of seeing it. But we need to remind ourselves of the fact that the abiding nature of the church is such that it hangs not on our ability to create a church or to increase the number of the church, to add to it or to choose not to be part of it. It all hangs upon the promises of God regarding that number that bears his name.

And because of the promise, the church will go on whether we see it or not. If I take you back, just coincidentally, we're part of a congregation here that has reached 50 years as a separate congregation in its own right in 2021.

So, if you go back 50 years to the beginnings of this congregation as a separate congregation, those who formed part of that beginning, if they were able at that moment to look forward to this day, they wouldn't recognize this congregation. They wouldn't recognize what's happening in this congregation.

[39 : 00] They wouldn't believe that what they had then could possibly have evaporated to the degree that it has at this present moment.

Such was the quickening and enlivening power of the Holy Spirit that they enjoyed at that moment, 50 years ago.

But if you were to take them back five years before then, that same number would not have believed it possible that they could form any part of this congregation.

Because they were so taken up with the world and the activities in the world. They were happy as they were. They were not believers. They were not interested in what believers believed.

And that changed for them. Now, why did that happen? It happened because at one point they came to resolve for themselves, I am going to be part of this body.

[40 : 03] I am going to increase this body. I am going to enliven this body. No. Because the promises of God to this people were not going to be nullified.

John L. Mackay is looking at this passage. The late John L. Mackay has written a commentary on the prophecy of Isaiah. He says this, and he's speaking about the way things were in Isaiah.

They remember that. He says, contrary to appearances in which nothing seemed to be happening, to expedite the fulfillment of God's covenant commitments to them.

The matter was under constant review in the courts of heaven. That's what we need to understand. If you're suckered into believing that the church is an unentity and it's on its way out, it's on its last legs.

You are suckered. Because the church will go on. Whether it goes on here is another matter. The mediatorial activity has not been suspended.

[41 : 16] It has still a purpose. It is still going on. The one who is the mediator of God's elect is now in glory at the right hand of the majesty on high.

But his garb is still a priestly garb. His intercession is ongoing. His prayers are ongoing for the church here on earth and all who form part of it.

And even you who have not made a profession of an interest in this church, maybe you're bound up in the prayers of that mediator and God will hear his prayer on your behalf.

Without question, these words have to be applied to our waiting sign, waiting for the coming of Messiah. However, everything and anything that is contained within that has to do with the glory of God.

And that will be fulfilled because it has to do with the glory of God. Just look at the picture we have of the church here in this chapter.

[42 : 18] And it's a wonderful picture. At one side we have this. A picture of total pessimism.

Somebody who is called desolate. Somebody who is called without... It's a picture...

A double picture if you like. A picture of a wilderness that is without form or comeliness. And a picture of a virgin who has no spouse and no hope of finding a marriage partner.

She has been rejected. And there is no one who looks upon her with fondness or affection. She is despised.

But then we have this image of someone coming and choosing this for a bride. For himself.

[43 : 30] His affection is such that it can't be denied. And that's the picture that we have. Some people mistakenly think that when Christ chooses a sinner to be someone who will be part of his church.

That he looks upon them and he says to himself, Oh, there's somebody who's worth choosing. There's someone who's lovely and full of grace.

It's all... It's just the choice of the group. Far from it. What Christ sees, he sees like no other.

And when he chooses for himself, he doesn't choose the pretty and the lovely and those who are admired. He chooses those who are going to be transformed by himself.

A desolate, forsaken man that is despised. And God is going to transform to become my delight in her.

[44 : 39] And that's what is true of her. His love is without equal and his pleasure is only echoed by her delight in him. And this is the purpose of the salvation that he proposes.

In many respects, when you look at this passage, this is the mystery of God's word.

It's not that you can interpret it any way you like. But there is a depth to the truth that is contained there. That it sometimes takes you into a near future.

And there is sufficient within the truth to make that near future perfectly understood.

But within that picture of the near future, there is also further proofs or elements that take you beyond the near future, into the distant future.

[45 : 40] Whatever that may be. We can't measure the distances. And in one sense, what we have here are promises that are made concerning what Christ is going to do for his church when he comes.

Remember, when Isaiah was preaching and teaching and spreading the gospel, Christ was yet to be born. He was looking to that day when Christ was born.

But at points in his teaching was looking beyond when Christ came. Looking beyond that cross. Looking beyond the New Testament era, as it were.

Looking beyond the day when this world would have run its course and God's people would be brought to himself. And they would rejoice in the presence of that Christ.

To whom they were promised. Derek Thomas suggests that the prophet is giving the believer a glimpse of heaven.

[46 : 45] And the heaven, the people of God ought to eagerly anticipate. C.H. Spurgeon writes that the back of every promise stands the living, pleading and prevailing high priest of our profession.

We may forget promises that we have faithfully made. That we have diligently professed to uphold.

And if our life were to hang by the threads of our promises. O betide us. But praise be that God has made provision of one whose promises are yea and amen are in him.

And he is the covenant head of his people and his promises will never, ever be found to fail. And may God bless you with these words.

Let's pray. Help us, O God, to recognize the privilege that we have of being within the prayers of any person living. Even those who are dead have prayed for us.

[48 : 03] The mystery is that their prayers are still being heard, even though themselves have passed from this world. We give thanks, O God, to the Lord.

The wonderous works that we have done we will show forth at length. For his testimony and his law in Israel he did place. And charge their fathers it to show to their succeeding race.

That so the race which was to come might well then learn and know. And sons unborn who should arise might to their sons then show.

That they might set their hope in God and suffer not to fall. His mighty works out of their mind but keep his precepts. All these verses.

The praises of the Lord our God and to his almighty strength. The praises of the Lord our God and to his almighty strength.

[49 : 41] The wonderous works that he has done we will show forth at length.

His hands of the Lord our God and to his holy strength. His hands of the Lord and to his holy strength. His hands of the Lord and to his holy strength. His hands of the Lord and to his holy strength.

His including grace.

The UMBLOW That's all the riches for to come.

My well and air, my low, and sons of bonders could arise.

[51 : 00] My goodness of men show, that if I say, O God, a sovereign one to fall, is mine, he works, and all am I, and he will be set on.

We come to the part of our service where the sacramental baptism is to be administered. We have a biblical warrant for it.

In the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 28, we read the following. Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. What does baptism signify?

[52 : 45] Well, at its simplest form, it reminds us of the fact that mankind, by nature, is fallen. And because of sin, and the pollution of sin, all mankind needs to experience the cleansing of their sin, have their sin taken away.

And if it's not taken away, it's simply the truth that it will remain. And what the Gospel teaches us, what the Bible teaches us, that only Christ, Jesus, can do this.

One of the most prolific New Testament writers is the Apostle Paul. And the Apostle Paul was, at the early part of his life, an enemy of the cross of Christ.

He didn't believe in Christ. He didn't want anything to do with Christ. If anything, his purpose, his mission in life was to destroy anything and everything connected with Christ.

And yet, in the mercy of God, he met with Christ. He met with him in his world and in his people. And supernaturally, he met with him when he was walking on the road.

[54 : 14] And he was gloriously converted. And someone who was, one moment, an enemy of the cross, came to know the reason for the cross.

And when he was introduced to the New Testament church, Ananias, one of the Christian members of the church, spoke to him.

And this is what he said to Saul. Paul, arise and be baptized. And wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Paul, as he became, needed to submit to the sacrament of baptism. He probably didn't understand the full implications of it.

But he understood the need that it was to submit to Christ. And the same apostle, he writes in one occasion, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

[55 : 34] Notice, Paul there speaks about salvation as regeneration, that is, being born again by the Spirit of God.

And, something that he could not do. When we think of the birth of a child, that child is not responsible for its birth.

He had no part. He had no part. She had no part to play in the conception. And for the believer, they appreciate that.

And whatever we are called to do as believers must always be in response to what Christ has done. It is always to be a response of faith in Christ.

Now, the element that we have in use today is water. And because it is water, it typifies, it helps us understand the nature of what baptism teaches.

[56 : 36] It teaches us, helps us understand that Christ must clean away our sin. He must take it away. Now, some people insist that only those for whom he has done this can possibly make use of the symbol.

Because, they argue, only those for whom he has done this can understand it. And that's quite true, as far as it goes.

Because there is an increased understanding on the part of those who have experienced the saving grace of Christ in their life.

Perhaps they can trust Christ more. I would hope that they would be able to trust Christ more. But if we look at the life of the disciples. There are many areas in the lives of the disciples where they had access to many truths.

Which they would argue that they believed. And yet, when you examined what they understood by what they believed. Their understanding left a lot to be desired.

[57 : 54] There are many things. And baptism is a vexatious topic in the history of the church. In the history of, not just the New Testament church.

But in the history of the Reformed tradition of the church to which we belong. There are so many beliefs or side roads that people have gone down on during the generations.

But what we teach is that a person must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved. And that by believing in Christ, the salvation that they have is a salvation that ensures that their sins are dealt with.

Those who are here with their children today are here with that understanding. However, however meaningful their understanding is.

However precise their understanding of everything is. Since I came here to the congregation, one of the tasks that I was asked to take on, or that I needed to take on, was that the congregation which came into existence as a congregation in 1971, it never kept a baptismal record.

[59 : 28] There was never a separate record of those who were baptized within the congregation, kept within as a separate part. It was recorded within the seven minutes.

Every parent who came seeking baptism, their names are recorded. But one of the roles that I had was to do this thing, to extrapolate from the session records the names of those who were baptized.

And up until today, there are 101 names that appear on that role. 101 names. After today, there will be 104.

Now, if you look at that role, you've got the names of parents who came seeking baptism for their children.

Some of these parents are no longer living. You've got names of the children that were baptized. Some of these children are no longer living.

[60 : 35] You've got names of the parents who came, who no longer associate with the congregation, despite them coming to seek baptism.

You've got the names of children who were baptized, who no longer associate with the congregation. Now, what does that say to us?

Does it say anything about their salvation? No, it doesn't. Does it say anything about whether these parents have made a statement about the relationship with Christ?

It doesn't. But that does not mean that the sacrament that we're engaging in here today is trivial or of no import.

This is an opportunity for parents to bring their children into the bosom of the church. And they undertake, when they take their vows, to commit to that undertaking.

[61 : 44] An undertaking that they will bring their children to church, that they will teach their children from the scripture, that they will encourage their children along with themselves as parents to know the Christ in which the sacrament speaks, and to do so to the best of their ability.

Now, it is a vow that they take. Unfortunately, we live in a generation where vows are trivialized. And the saddest thing of all is that there are ministers such as myself who take vows, who take marriage vows, they take baptism vows, they take vows to do with their profession, and these vows are very quickly surrendered or walked away from.

That's not a trivial thing. It's not a minor thing. It's an important thing we do when we stand before a congregation of God's people and others and promise to do our best.

But the thing is this. It does not and never has depended upon our ability to keep these vows perfectly.

Because not one of us, including me, whom I expected to think is perfect in all of these things, it is not and never has depended upon our ability to do that.

[63 : 25] It is what you do with the understanding that where you are unequal to the task, that you do so with God's help.

You raise your child with God's help. The couples here, one person will take the vows, but they're taking the vows on behalf of the parents for their child, to teach them, to encourage them, to envelop them in prayer, and to do so where they are weak and unable to fulfill.

I remember many years ago, more than once, I remember someone saying to me about someone close to myself, a relative, and he said, this relative was not bringing their children for baptism.

And he said, why don't you speak to that person and insist that they come for baptism? Well, I said, I can't do that. Because that person does not come to church.

That person clearly does not have an interest in the things of God. And baptism for that person would be wrong. It's wrong for anybody who does not treat the subject matter with the importance that it merits.

[64 : 51] But at the same time, I remember being spoken to by a member, and he said, well, how can we be, how can we take such a vow?

Because we're not going to keep it. And that's true. But the vow is there to keep you before God, keep you dependent upon Christ.

I should refer back to the passage we looked at today. The promises that God made, only he could make them. The promises that Christ could make for his church, only he could make them.

And thanks be to him that where he is able to stand, while we cannot, his promises are there for everyone as well.

May the parents who are today bringing their children know God's help to do what they cannot. Don't use it as an excuse that you're useless, that you're a failure.

[66 : 02] That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying to you that every single one of us, because of our sinful inclination, will not be able to do anything that we're asked to do by Christ perfectly.

But we can do it to the best of our ability with his help. And his help is what we must learn to seek. But I'm going to come down now, and I'm going to ask one of the parents to respond to the vows.

It's a different scenario today to what we usually have. First of all, the children are over a year old, and they're not easily penned.

So they might have to do some grabbing. And secondly, the Arab would spread out because of the situation regarding COVID.

So I'm making allowances for these things. I've come down, and I'm going to ask all of you to stand. And I'm going to ask each one of the parents, in turn, well, one of the parents, to respond to the vows.

[67 : 18] And then we will try and apply the water of baptism. I'll just come down. If you could stand. I'll start with the scriptures.

Do you believe in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our God? Yes. Do you believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testament should be the word of God and the only rule of life and faith?

Yes. Do you believe the Lord Jesus Christ should be the only Savior of God's elect? Yes. Do you promise with God's help to raise your child in the fear and recognition of the Lord?

Yes. Do you believe in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our God?

Do you believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God and the only rule of life and faith? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be the only Savior of God's elect?

[68 : 57] Yes. Do you promise with God's help to raise your child in the fear and admiration of the Lord? Do you believe in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God?

Do you believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God and the only rule of life and faith? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be the only Savior of God's elect?

Do you promise with God's help to raise your child in the fear and recognition of the Lord?
Yes. Thank you. I think I know your name.

I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[70 : 59] I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Holy Spirit.

And we have thought that they would be changed from the use for which it is largely meant, the use for which it has been put in the service.

A servant that speaks to us of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was born into this world, and that he died on the cross.

He was born and lived his life without sin, and yet he died because of sin. And those who have come today believe that there is sin in the world, that there is sin in the heart, and that there is only one way by which that sin can be removed, through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks for these children that have been brought into the bosom of the congregation here, by their parents, that you would bless them, and that they would know a good blessing in their hearts and in their minds, and that they would know that they have been taught the things that have come true, worth, and value.

[72 : 45] That they would know that the God of heaven is the God, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior, for whom they must, to whom they must look for the salvation of their souls.

May the parents, each one, be guided by the hand, in the sense that they have to deal with from day to day, within their homes and within the context of life in this world.

May they be encouraged to put their trust in God, and to look to God when the more resources and the experience is insufficient. We pray that you would remember us, each one, guide us in the things that pertain to everlasting life.

For dear sin, Jesus is in it. Amen. Amen. Amen.

I don't think my lapen might be very effective. But at this point, what I normally do, and what I think is important, is to remind ourselves of the duty that we have as those who are witnessing what has taken place here today.

[74 : 15] that we are not just witnesses to it in a disinterested way. I sincerely hope it is not like that.

But in a way in which we have taken these children to heart we have seen them being brought by their parents to the church, perhaps not for the first time but to the church for the first time in this particular way that they may be brought into the fellowship of the church to experience the word of God at first hand to experience what it is to be within the sphere of influence of the prayers of God's people.

And we don't believe that that is something that we hold as dear as we ought.

I remember growing up, occasionally going as a child to the homes within the community where you were safe to wander around.

And sometimes I would stumble onto situations where the family were gathered at worship or at prayer. And I often think about what these prayers were who they were praying for but I very much doubt if they were not if they didn't have contained within them a desire for the children of the community that they prayed for them and that meant they prayed for me even though I was not their child.

[76 : 08] And in one sense these children are not our children but in another sense every one of these children are our children and we have a burden for them and we have a desire for them.

You know, I don't suppose when we had our last baptism here we had any thought at that point of the impact of COVID on the communities in which we live.

And that impact is something that perhaps we don't fully understand today. But we're thankful that we can pray and that we can pray for our children who come into this world in an environment like that and are exposed to many dangers that we knew nothing of.

And my encouragement to you as members of the church as adherents of the church to continue to remember these children who are your children to pray for them and to bring them before God to ask that the instruction they receive in the home would be blessed by God to them the instruction they receive in the school and within the Sunday school here and those entrusted with that teaching that they would know a blessed experience because of it that it would be a strengthening to them that it would make them a caliber of passion that would be able to go out into the world when they achieve maturity and that would be a characteristic that would mark them out in the world that they have been taught the things of God and that they know something about the Christ of the gospel for themselves.

It's a very important thing. Very few in this world I've said it often that when you watch these television programs where there are quiz programs and questions are asked about the Bible the level of ignorance that we see today is almost unheard of because people don't teach the Bible people are not taught the Bible through no fault of their own and some people say so what?

[78 : 43] well I don't think the Bible would teach any one of us anything that would not be of of value to us so you remember that as you remember these children that you pray for them and that you pray for their parents in a difficult generation and we're going to bring your service to our conclusion singing the words of the 23rd Psalm Psalm 23 the Lord's my shepherd I not want he makes me down to lie at pasture green he leadeth me the quiet waters by my soul he does restore again and me to walk doth make within the paths of righteousness even for his own name's sake so I'll sing the whole psalm to God's praise the Lord's my shepherd I not want the Lord's my shepherd

I not want he makes me now to lie amputee bless me he came up near me he rideth me the quiet journey my good shepherd Order mine.

My joy he doth restore again.

And he to walk away with him the powers of righteousness.

He is for his own name. Yet, though my walk in death shall fail.

[81 : 21] Yet, when I fear my death, Or thou art with me on thy road, I shall be come for still.

My kingdom love, I'll furnish it.

In presence of my foes, My head of God with oil anoint.

I'm my God overgrown. Goodness and mercy on my life, Concert of glory, And in those lives forevermore.

My breath in Israel be. Amen. Amen.

[83 : 14] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord God in heaven, as we come to the end of our service, we pray that you would bless these young children and continue to watch over them all the days of their life.

We pray that you would bless them, each one, as their parents, their grandparents, even great-grandparents, remembering all connected with them and continue to visit the mercy of congregation here, adding to the number of young that are amongst us and especially adding to the number of your believing people that we may trust in the Lord, in the self-potion.

Continue to watch over us and cleanse from sin. Now may grace, measure and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all. Never and always. Amen. Now the parents can go out with their children first and the rest from Stephen de Arlington directed to leave.

Thank you.