

Let the Little Children Come to Me (Baptism)

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[0 : 00] And let's read again these well-known words. In verse 15, Now they were bringing even infants to Jesus, that he might touch them.

And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. They rebuked the parents who brought them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

Truly I say to you, Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. Six years ago, almost to the very day, I had the joy of joining in marriage, Catherine and Gareth. And almost in the very spot where you'll be presenting Rory for baptism, these two young lives, these two young Christians became husband and wife.

The joy of parents and family and friends and congregation that were present then. And it's another joy shared by parents and family and friends and congregation that are present now.

[1 : 13] And no greater joy, I have to say, than to myself as one of Rory's grandfathers, to be the one who baptizes my little grandson in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

And it's to him and to him alone that we give praise, yes, for the blessing of marriage, for the blessing of a Christian home, and the blessing of the new life that we've already witnessed, and we'll be witnessing again in a few moments' time, when Rory will be presented for baptism. And of course I will be saying something about the significance of baptism, what will be happening when Rory is baptised. But let me just say this now, I'll no doubt repeat it again, but let me just say this now, that it's nothing magical, it's nothing superstitious that's going to happen when Rory is baptised.

Baptism will not make Rory a Christian. But he will have, by the water upon his head, he will have that sign and seal upon his head that will confirm that when he does make his profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, that he will know eternal salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as we said, we'll be emphasising that more later in the service. But before the sacrament, the sacrament of baptism's dispensed, I think we do need to, we must, in fact we must turn to God's Word and reflect a little on the whole subject of children and God.

[2 : 52] Because we live in a society, and quite rightly so, a society that wants the best for our children. Whether it's our own society or across the world, that surely is a universal truth.

We love our children. We are a society that loves our children, that cares for our children. I suppose the way that even we protect our children is such that it's almost unprecedented in history.

And it's, of course, God honouring that we want the best for our children, our little ones. We all are made in the image of God. We're made as God's creation in God's image.

But, of course, we have to ask a very honest question. We have to ask and answer the question honestly. What is the best for our children?

I mean, is wanting the best for our children simply, that they be well fed and looked after, cared for, provided for, given the best of education?

[3 : 55] Well, that is perfectly correct. I mean, it's absolutely commendable. These areas have to be focused on. But there's one thing that, I think, in our own society, that we've largely forgotten.

And surely it's this, that for the very best for our children, the very best for our children is hearing and hearing the words that Jesus said, even 2,000 years ago, words that are still uttered today. Let the little children come to Jesus. That is the very best that we surely desire for our children. Because unless our children are brought to Jesus, unless they come to know Him and to trust in Him as their Saviour, then I say in all respect to everyone here, they're missing out on the very, very best.

Catherine Gareth, I know, believe that in their hearts. That's why they're here this morning to present little Rory, well, not quite the little now, but to present little Rory here for baptism. They're bringing Rory to baptism because it's Catherine Gareth's heart's desire that Rory will be brought to know the Saviour, to know Jesus. Their heart's desire, it says, my heart's desire, I pray your heart's desire as well that this little child will have that wonderful blessing of knowing the Lord Jesus as his Saviour.

[5 : 26] And so, the words that Jesus spoke 2,000 years ago are still being heeded, still being followed, still being obeyed. Let the little children come to me, says Jesus.

So, what was Jesus saying when He uttered these words? Why is it so important that again, we listen to these words, that we put them into practice? Why should we bring our children to Jesus? Well, there are two things I want to say. The first is that Jesus welcomes children. Jesus welcomes children. And then secondly, we look at children and the Kingdom of God. But Jesus welcomes children. And to gauge that, if we just, you know, sort of cast our minds to what we read there in Luke chapter 18.

Just picture the scene there in that village there in Israel. Jesus has been teaching and normally the posture for teaching was sitting. So, Jesus has been sitting on something, maybe a bench, maybe a stool.

[6 : 27] And obviously, as He's teaching, He's been crowded around. There are crowds of people listening to what Jesus is saying about what makes somebody right with God. as we read from verse 9 on the Pharisee and the tax collector.

Again, we'll come back to that later. But there's Jesus teaching about the necessity of that humble attitude before God. And as Jesus is speaking, you know, He says in the process of teaching, what do we find?

We find that a number of parents are there and they've got their children in their arms. And the parents, they're wanting to bring Jesus to get through that crowd, to push their way through the crowd and to have Jesus bless their children, to lay His hands on the heads of these children. And, you know, you can just picture the scene there, the commotion, the, we might say, the kerfuffle of all that's happening as these parents try to push through the crowd to get near Jesus. because they want their children to be blessed by the Lord. And just as they get near, there's a hindrance.

[7 : 41] Disciples are there. It's almost like the disciples think they can protect Jesus. And the disciples tell them, parents, get rid of these. Go away. Go away. Don't disrupt the teacher and his teaching.

Now, from a rational point of view, we can work out why the disciples had that kind of attitude. I mean, in their opinion, in their opinion, their Lord and Master, in their opinion, that was the last thing that, you know, their great Lord would want to do to be, somehow lower Himself to be near children and lower Himself to bless these children.

I mean, Jesus has been preaching, He's been teaching, He's been healing others, He's been doing the great work of God. And so, for parents to bring little children to be near Jesus, they would be thinking, somehow this is going to demean their great teacher.

That was the kind of thinking that, I suppose, was around at the time. Children weren't considered terribly important, certainly not at that time. So the disciples, they rebuke the parents and tell them to go elsewhere.

But of course, Jesus sees all this. What does Jesus do? Does He agree with the disciples? Does He say, well, yes, I'm so much far above even for children to come to Me?

[9 : 03] Does He say, I don't want them here? Does He say, you're actually insulting my status by bringing children near Me? Of course not. He calls parents to let the children come to Him.

Why? Because Jesus welcomes all who come seeking Him. He welcomes all who come seeking Him. Yes, and He welcomes those, yes, who truly seek His blessing upon their children.

And that's who Jesus is. Jesus is the one who welcomes children and who welcomes any who come to Him seeking Him, seeking His great blessing.

I don't know what you think of Jesus, but He's certainly not the caricature that some have of Jesus as somehow someone who wants to turn people away rather than for those who seek Him to find Him, to know that in fact they are found by Jesus.

And you might even think that the Christian church over the decades, over the centuries even has had that caricature of turning people away, of somehow creating the barrier so high according to different criteria that we don't really want you.

[10:18] But that of course is a travesty and a tragedy not at all. Jesus said, as we saw a few weeks ago on another occasion, come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.

And Jesus says, let those little children come to me. You see the same call, come to me, come to me, says Jesus. It's not the same go away from me, come to me.

This is the saviour whom we worship here in Livingston and at every other church where the name of Jesus is proclaimed. And of course Jesus is the one whom Catherine and Gareth wish Rory to know as his saviour and friend.

So Jesus says, let the children come to me. Come to who? Come to Jesus. So don't ever think, don't ever think that somehow a child is too young to be taught about Jesus, that somehow, you know, Christianity is just for adults, for grown-ups, knowing Jesus as Lord.

You know, church is not only for adults. No, don't ever think that the truth of Scripture is somehow too difficult for children to understand.

[11:38] Some of you, of course, know that Catherine was brought up in the island of Skye certainly for her former years or formative, I should say, formative years. And our minister then, the late, dare I say, great Kenny MacDonald, would always say or often say there's nothing more simple and profound than the truth that Jesus loves me, this I know.

Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so. And that's simple truth, it's profound truth, but it's truth that yes, children can grasp even at an early age.

And so, that's why we do bring children like Rory and other children that you've seen this morning, why they will be brought to church, why they will grow up to hear the name of Jesus whether mentioned in church or mentioned in their home, that name mentioned in reverence, the name that tells of the saviour, the name Jesus that means saviour, salvation, and of course our saviour himself who was a little child, Jesus born in Bethlehem, Jesus born for you and for me and for Rory, for all whom Jesus came to save, because Jesus came to save his people from their sins and so let the little children, yes, even the little children, let them come to Jesus to know him as their Lord and saviour and don't hinder them, don't hinder, don't prevent them from coming to Jesus, how do we show that, how do we do that, well, you know, as Christian parents, be an example to your children, whether your own children, whether your church children, be examples of what it means to follow Jesus, be an example to show what it means to love the saviour and don't hinder them, don't hinder them by any kind of conduct, behaviour that detracts from the love of Jesus and certainly don't hinder them by almost telling them that they're too young to know Jesus as a saviour and how else do we not hinder them, well, well, pray for them, pray for your children, pray for your grandchildren, pray for our church children, pray each day for them that they'll be instructed in the knowledge of the Lord and let them come to Jesus just as the parents of these children 2,000 years ago when they brought their children to Jesus, it was Jesus who didn't hinder them,

Jesus didn't turn them away, He won't turn away any child who's brought to Him in faith, children, and Jesus but secondly, and the service will be a little shorter than normal, children and the kingdom of God because you notice when we were reading that Jesus referred to the kingdom, do not hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of God, truly I say to you whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it, now this evening I want to say a lot more on the kingdom of God but just for this morning because I know not everyone's going to be here tonight but what's Jesus saying here, what's all this about belonging to the kingdom of God that whoever doesn't receive the kingdom of God like a child won't enter it, well I think we have to work out first of all what Jesus is saying about the kingdom of God and I want to say this in a shorter way we'll look at it much more this evening but I mean you know go through the New Testament and Jesus speaks a lot about the kingdom of God about the reign of God in a person's life that having God as king being subject or being a subject in his kingdom in his spiritual kingdom that kingdom of God that tells of the good news that Jesus has come to bring undeserving sinners into his kingdom to have him reign in their lives as king so when Jesus is speaking here about children in the kingdom of God he's saying that being in his kingdom having him reign over you well it involves that childlike dependence that childlike trust in receiving

Jesus as king you know having that character of a child that being humble being dependent receiving Jesus as a saviour trusting him completely to save you just like you know yourself you have children little children little childlike Rory he trusts in his mum and dad for absolutely everything to keep him well to keep him safe to keep him contented and you see how Jesus brings out that truth in the way that you know this chapter certainly unfolds that's why we read from verse 9 that's why we read the section before little children come to me section that's why we read the section afterwards because you see right from verse 9 Jesus has been speaking a parable he's been speaking a parable about humility before God that parable you all know it the self-righteous Pharisee the man who had no humility before God and then on the other hand the humble person the tax collector when he recognised his great need before a merciful and forgiving God and we saw that parable that Jesus taught being given immediately before the incident of the little children being brought to Jesus and then what did you see after that parable the rich young man who wouldn't be humble who wouldn't sell his possessions and follow

[17 : 48] Jesus so these three interconnected stories telling us what it means to have a right relationship with Jesus based on that humble acceptance of him as Lord and Saviour having that right relationship with him based on a complete lack of self-righteousness having no pride in self having you know lacking that that that pride but coming before him with that true humility that humility that tells of a person humbly depending on the Saviour and you see when you see Rory coming something before me for baptism what will you see you'll see a little child who's so dependent on his parents to bring him now that in itself I suppose is a lesson that you know that tells that every Christian is utterly dependent on

God for everything in the very safety of your soul and what you know picture will be seen in little Rory that his simple faith in his parents he trusts in them for his care for their provision for him for their nurturing him and think you know of that in relation to every Christian you must put your faith in God who provides for you who cares for you who nourishes you who nurtures you who nurtures and nourishes you by the very word of God we'll see in Rory the infant who's helpless without his loving parents every Christian is helpless without the saving love of God and Jesus and so there's a challenge here the challenge that Jesus gave to those who listened to him 2000 years ago it's the same challenge that's given today anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it says Jesus why because he says unless you receive the kingdom of God like a little child and yet unless you acknowledge Jesus as Lord and King unless you have that child like trust and an utter dependence on him Jesus says you will never enter the joy of being found in the eternal kingdom of God you see the disciples tried to hinder these little children from coming to Jesus they were rebuked by Jesus don't be a hindrance don't be a hindrance to yourself in refusing to be like little children coming to Jesus in dependence on him alone for salvation but come in faith to the one who's calling you now and you will know that joy of being found in the kingdom of God that kingdom that never ends you'll stay in the arms of

Jesus forever and so we pray that these words that we've listened to these words that we've proclaimed that these words will be blessed each one of us here this morning in a few moments time we're going to ask someone to come and collect the family and the children from the Sunday school as I say the service is a little shorter this morning we're going to sing one of the longer psalms so that everyone is ready in place but I will as I said from after the singing of Psalm 8 I will explain what will be happening and I pray that God will truly bless this remaining part of our service Amen so let's sing now let's sing in Psalm 8 and page 7 we're going to sing the whole of the psalm the whole of the psalm and it's in page 7 and we sing from the beginning in we'll sing the whole of the psalm as we stand to sing in

Woah in Amen.

[23 : 18] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Please be seated. Now, at this point, I just want to say a few words about what is going to happen. And within probably the next three minutes, I try not to be too long, but I do want to say something about what baptism here is saying.

[26 : 31] The first thing I think we have to say is that Jesus commands baptism. Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make

disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father.

Of the Son. Of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost. And Rory will be baptized in the name of the Father. Of the Son. And of the Holy Spirit.

So there's that command of Jesus. And what I will say too is that the sign that Rory will have in his head and the sign of the water, the cleansing of the water, that sign of water will tell of that washing with water, that cleansing from sin that, yes, enables a person to know the Lord Jesus.

You will be witnesses of Rory's baptism in a few moments' time. He'll be given that sign of cleansing, the cleansing from sin. I said at the start, I'll say it again. It's not going to make him a Christian, but it certainly will point to the power of Jesus.

That power of Jesus to cleanse from sin when by God's grace Rory does commit his life to the Lord Jesus. And as we said, that sign will be given in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

[28 : 02] He will be claimed for God. And I also say this, in that cleansing, that cleansing, there's a promise, there's a pledge that God will cleanse from sin when Rory puts his trust in him.

That promise that God gives that whoever puts his or her, gives his or her life to the Saviour will know that great salvation. So is that an assurance that what God's promised in giving eternal life to all who call upon the upon him, that will be carried out.

And Rory will have that promise upon his head in baptism. And one more thing to say. Rory is a child of believing parents.

He is part of the community, the covenant community of the church. And by his baptism, he'll be acknowledged as a member of the visible church with all the privileges, all the blessings that that membership gives.

And so we thank God for these privileges that that Rory is going to have and pray that yes, in the fullness of time, that he will put his faith in the Lord Jesus and repent of his sins and make profession of his faith in the Saviour.

[29 : 21] So, without any further ado, I'm going to ask Catherine and Garen and Rory to come up to the front.

Just give me a minute until I get organised here. I think I have everything. Okay. Okay.

Let me just get this correct. Now, Catherine Rory. Catherine. Catherine Garrett. So your name is in my head the whole time.

I'm going to ask a few questions. Do you acknowledge the Bible to be the Word of God and your only guide in all matters of faith and conduct? Do you confess God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as revealed in Scripture to be your God?

Do you profess faith in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of sinners and as your Saviour and Lord? Do you promise independence in God's promised help by your prayers, teaching, and example to bring up your child in the instruction and discipline of the Lord?

[30 : 33] Can I ask the congregation to stand? Right, Rory. Rory Patrick Morrison.

I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. May God bless you and keep you.

May he make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May he send his countenance upon you and keep you safe. Amen.

Amen. Lord our God, our Heavenly Father, we do indeed pray for Rory, Rory Patrick Morrison. We ask, O Lord, that you will bless him, that you will keep him, that you will make your face to shine upon him, that you will be gracious to him, and that you will keep him in all peace.

Bless his parents, bless the family. May they know your hand upon them in blessing. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

[31 : 41] Amen. As Rory tries to demolish my tie, I'm going to say a few things. Please, please be seated. Sorry, sorry. You can stand.

Yes. Yes, I understand. Yes, be standing. Yeah. Six years ago, I married Catherine Gareth here and said a few formal words which you've probably all forgotten.

I'm just going to say a few formal things to you as parents. You've made your vows. You've promised to bring Rory up in the instruction and nurture of God by your example, by your prayers.

And you will do that. I know you will do that. I've known Catherine all my life. I've known you, Gareth, for eight years, is it? Something like that. Yes. And I know that you will fulfill the vows that you made today, not just in the presence of the congregation here, but in the presence of God.

And I pray this for you as your witnesses of this baptism, you as a congregation. Please pray for Rory, his mum and dad.

[32 : 50] Please pray for all our children here. They are God's heritage. Children are God's heritage. And I pray that, you know, this moment will not be forgotten in the life of this congregation, in the life of this young family.

It's been a privilege, it's been a blessing to baptise my first grandchild. But I know it's a blessing for all here today. Amen.

Amen. Well, we're going to sing finally. We're going to sing. You can sit down there. We're going to sing in Psalm 128.

Psalm 128. On page 172. Just that short psalm. And the tune, I don't know, Herringate.

How blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk the way that he has shown. Success and blessing will be yours. You'll eat the fruit that you have grown. Your wife will be a fruitful vine.

[33 : 54] And round your table will be placed your children like young olive shoots. Thus he fears. He who fears the Lord is blessed. May you behold Jerusalem's good from Zion.

May God's blessing flow. Your children's children. May you see. May God in Israel. May God in Israel. May God in his church. Peace be still. We'll stand to sing. Psalm 128.

Now, let down aogy of a number of love and drive. O let the whole earth be the Lord, to walk away by thee as shown.

You said that nothing will be yours, you'll leave the proof that you have grown.

Your wife will be our fruitful wife, and round your cake will be saved.

[35 : 16] Your children, let yon all it should, as he who gives the Lord his name.

May you be all to Jerusalem's good. Come, Zion, may God bless you.

Sing for your children. Children, children, may you see.

May God, O Lord, his rest be his soul. Please remain standing.

And now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rest on and remain with you, both now and forevermore.

[36 : 26] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.