

# Children's Sermon - 3 Best Friends

*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: 22 June 2014

Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[ 0 : 0 0 ] We pray that God will bless to us that portion of his word. Now if we look at the final part of that passage, I'm going to divide the sermon today into three parts, and we'll do a singing after each of the parts.

It's particularly for the younger ones, but I hope that all the points that we mention will be, of course, important to us all, whatever age we are at.

But it's particularly directed to the children and to the young folks. So if we look at John 11 and from verse 25, Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life.

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. And whoever believes in me, lives and believes in me, shall never die. Do you believe this?

She said to him, yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who is coming into the world. Friends are very important to us.

[ 1 : 0 5 ] And best friends are more important still. I'm sure all of us today have friends, and I'm sure each one of us has someone or more than one that we would call best friend or best friends.

And I want to speak today about three best friends that we all must have. And the three best friends that I'm going to mention are very often spoken about in the Bible.

They're called faith and hope and love. And these three best friends will always be good for us to know and will guide us safely and will help us throughout all the stages of our lives, whether we're very young or indeed have reached very old age.

Faith and hope and love will always be good friends to us. And we're going to look at faith, first of all, from what you read here in John chapter 11.

Because this is how Jesus spoke to Martha at a time when she very much felt the death of her brother Lazarus. What he said was that he would rise again, and Martha said, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

[ 2 : 2 6 ] But Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live. And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

Do you believe this? She said to him, yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world. Now, faith involves two things.

First of all, we need a faith in God's word. Faith to believe that this Bible is God's word. We call the Bible God's word, and we do that rightly because the Bible is God's word.

And although different people over the course of many hundreds of years were used to write the books that we find in the Bible, people like Moses and Isaiah and John here, the Apostle, and the Apostle Paul and Peter, all of these different people were used by God to write parts of what we now have as a complete book, the Bible.

But God is himself the author of it. It was God who directed them as to what to write. It was God who came to work in their minds so that they wrote down what he wanted to reveal about himself, about the work that he was doing, about why he was doing miracles, about why he dealt with Israel in the Old Testament the way he did, about why he sent them prophets, about especially why his son Jesus Christ came into the world, why he became human, why he died on the cross, why he rose from the dead.

[ 4 : 11 ] All of that, and the meaning of that, and the importance of that, is set out for us in the Bible as God's word. God has revealed himself to us in this Bible because he wanted to tell us these things about himself.

Otherwise, we could not have come to know these things by trying to find it out for ourselves. But that means that this Bible, this word of God, is reliable.

It means we can trust this word not to put us wrong, not to actually put us on the wrong track. If we follow the teachings of the word of God, as God has given us this account of himself, and of ourselves, and what we need, then we will be on the right path.

And we will be kept on the right path throughout the whole course of life. In other words, God's word is trustworthy, and something that is trustworthy, or someone who is trustworthy, you can believe in.

You can trust it. You can actually rely upon it. You can come to it and not have to ask the question, I wonder how much of this is true. I wonder if I can depend on this.

[ 5 : 30 ] I wonder if I really can believe in this without needing to change what I believe about God as my life develops. Here is God's word that is reliable and trustworthy that you can depend upon, that you can believe in as God's own truth, God's word.

That's the first thing about faith. Faith and its relationship to the Bible as the word of God. The second thing, even more important in a sense than that, is that faith is faith in Jesus Christ.

What Jesus was saying to Martha is that it wasn't enough for her to believe in who he was, to believe that he was able to do miracles, to believe that certain things about him were true.

She needed to believe in him trustingly. She needed to actually believe that he was the resurrection and the life, and that by trusting in him, her life would be safe.

Now it's important that we all understand, and as we grow up, we understand what exactly it means to believe in Christ.

[ 6 : 47 ] Because the Bible in different places tells us that what we believe about Christ is important, but we can believe a lot of things about Christ to be true because we read about them in the Bible, and yet the Bible says we need to go further than that we actually need to believe in Christ in a way that trusts in him forevermore, and that actually finds that our life is looked after by him.

It means that you believe more than believing what Jesus did, that you believe he was a good person, which he was. It means that you believe more than that he was perfect, that he died on the cross.

It actually means that you trust him with your life, or put it another way, that you give your life over to Jesus for him to look after it for you.

And that means your life now, and your life in the future, including your life after death, your life in eternity. Whoever lives, he says, and believes in me shall never die.

Do you believe this? And Martha said, Yes, Lord, I believe that you are that Christ, the Son of God. Now, how can we illustrate that?

[ 8 : 08 ] Is there any way that we can illustrate what it means to believe in Jesus in a way that trusts your life to him, that gives over your life into his hands for him to look after you, and to look after your future as well as your present?

Well, just let me just give you a picture of something. Supposing that you are on one side of a huge gulf, you know what a gulf is, or a rabin, a huge big cliff going all the way down, there's a river at the bottom, something like you find in the Grand Canyon in America, perhaps even smaller than that as well, but here's this huge cliff downwards, there's a river at the bottom, and on the other side there's a cliff again on the other side just the same, this big ravine, and the side that you are on is collapsing, everything around you is beginning to collapse, and the other side, over on the other side, everything is secure, everything is safe, everything is intact, and you need to get across to the other side, but how are you going to do it?

And along comes this engineer who tells you that he's an engineer, that he's a skillful engineer, that he's going to build a bridge from where you are on the side that's collapsing right across to the other side where you'll be safe, and as you're listening to him telling him about yourself, you fall asleep, and when you're waking up, lo and behold, the bridge is finished, and he's on the other side, and he sees that you've woken up, and he's saying to you, come on, come over quickly, don't stay anymore on that side, come across the bridge that I have built, and then you look at the bridge, and it's just a rope bridge, it's one of those that swings in the wind, and you look at the bridge, and you say, I'm not sure if, I'm not sure if he's built it, I didn't see him building it, but he's telling me that he built it, that he was a qualified engineer, who knew how to build a bridge quickly, but it doesn't look all that safe to me, and then he says to you again, look, come across the bridge, or else, you're going to be overtaken by everything that collapses around you, so off you go, you go across the bridge, you make it safely to the other side, the engineer welcomes you and says,

I told you, I told you what was true, you believed me, you acted on what I said, and now you're safe on the other side, and that's what it's like for salvation in Jesus, we are on this side, and Jesus is on the other side in heaven, we need to get to heaven, and we can't build the bridge ourselves, but the great news of the gospel is, the truth of the gospel, the things that God will have us to believe, is that Jesus has built that bridge for us in himself, I am the resurrection and the life, whoever lives and believes in me shall never die, what he means is, you will go safely across to heaven, and will never die, and will not be taken, will not be overtaken by the collapse of everything when God comes in judgment, in other words, you can trust in Jesus with your life, you can give your life to him, and you and I must do that, that's what faith is, faith is trusting in him, faith is taking him at his word, taking his word to be true, taking everything that he has done, even though you haven't seen him dying on the cross, you read about it in the Bible, the Bible which is true, and because you read about it in the Bible which is true, and that it is the

Son of God who is telling you, you're saying about the Bible and you're saying about him, I can really trust this and I can trust in nothing else the way that I can trust in this, so Jesus today is calling you and he's saying follow me, believe in me, trust in me, give your life to me, commit yourself to me, put it into my hands, and I will guarantee that you will be safe with me, and that you will travel safely to heaven.

[ 12 : 39 ] That's our first best friend, faith, believing in the Bible as God's word, believing in Jesus, trusting in him, committing our life to him, giving our life over to him, to be saved by him.

Amen. Amen.

Now the second friend that we're going to think about is hope.

And when we think about these words of Jesus to Martha, you can actually see that there's hope here as well as faith. The word hope is not used, but what Jesus is saying to her is, this will be the future for all who trust in me, for all who believe, they shall never die.

It's something that he was inviting her to look forward to, to think about as something in the future. And that is what hope really is. Hope is something that looks forward as we exercise hope, as we use hope.

[ 14 : 54 ] Hope is something that looks forward to something that you expect to happen, but that is not yet here, that has not yet happened. That's what he was saying to Martha, effectively saying to us too, there is heaven for the people of God, that's what God's salvation means for them, that they will be forever with him in heaven.

That's what they're hoping towards, they're hoping in, and hoping towards. So hope looks forward to something not yet, but something that will actually happen as hope looks forward to it.

In other words, that means that hope relates to a promise. Wherever you've got hope, you've always got a promise. Something is promised, something that is promised will happen, and hope says, well, I look forward to that happening.

That's what God is saying with regard to our salvation as well, although we receive it in this world, we come to be saved by putting our trust in Christ as we've just said, that's our first best friend.

But when we do that, then we hope. We look to the future with hope. We look towards eternal life in heaven with Jesus, and we say that's God's promise to me, that's what Jesus promises, and therefore I'm looking forward to that, I'm hoping towards that being fulfilled, towards that coming to pass, whenever God will bring it to pass for me.

[ 16 : 26 ] hope. So hope always builds on a promise, believes the promise, accepts the promise, looks forward to the promise being fulfilled. But not every hope is a sure hope.

Not every hope is a certain hope. It all depends on who's making the promise, and on whether that promise really is going to be kept.

Let me just try and illustrate that again. Supposing I was to say to you today, I promise you that this Christmas I will give you a gift of one hundred thousand pounds, if only.

But supposing for all the children I was going to say, on Christmas morning, I hope, I'm promising to give you an envelope and inside the envelope will be one hundred thousand pounds.

I will do my very best to fill that envelope with a hundred thousand pounds so that it will then be yours. That's my promise, that's my gift to you, that's what I'm going to do everything possible to bring about for you.

[ 17 : 47 ] Would you have a sure hope that that would come to be true? true? I don't think so. Why not?

Because I would never be able, certainly not the way I am now, to provide you with a hundred thousand pounds. I don't have anything like a hundred thousand pounds.

So when you say, when I say this is my promise to you, and you ask me, can you guarantee that I will really have a hundred thousand pounds on Christmas morning, I will have to say to you, well I can't guarantee it, I'll do my very best to bring it about, I really would like to do it for you, it's my heart's desire to give you that, then you would have to say to me, well my hope then is not going to be complete, it's not going to be sure, it's not going to be a certain hope, because you can't guarantee your promise, therefore my hope can't be one hundred percent sure and certain, and that's it, that's true, but it's not like that with God's promise, every promise that God makes, you know that that promise will come true, it is God who is giving it to us, and God never lies, and not only that, but Jesus died on the cross, and rose again from the dead, to make everything that God promises to us, absolutely sure and certain and sealed to us, how do we know that

God's promise is true, well for one thing, it should be enough for us that we know God does not tell lies, and God himself has the ability to bring everything that he promises to pass, absolutely, surely, certainly, but you also know that Jesus died on the cross, that Jesus rose from the dead, that Jesus himself is the resurrection and the life, everything about Jesus makes God's promises absolutely secure, you can actually believe the promise of God, and you can actually have a certain hope concerning it, because it is going to turn out to be true, all you have to do is believe it, and accept it, the Bible speaks about hope as something, the Christians hope, apart from every other hope, just think about the hope that I was giving you by saying

I was promising you a hundred thousand pounds for Christmas, your hope about that is not going to be certain, because I can't guarantee it, but the hope that Jesus speaks about here, whoever lives and believes in me shall never die, you don't ask then about this, I wonder if it's true, I wonder if Jesus is able to bring this about, I wonder if this is really secure, I wonder if I can really accept it and fully believe in it, yes you can, he is the resurrection and the life, he has actually himself risen from the dead, and he is able to give eternal life to everyone who trusts in him, that's what the Bible calls a hope that will not be put to shame, or you could put it another way, a hope that will not be shattered, a hope that will not be disappointed, so go back to my promise, let's imagine that next

[ 21 : 24 ] Christmas has arrived, and you haven't heard from me, and you're still expecting this hundred thousand pounds, and when you come up on Christmas morning, when you get up and go down to see what presents you've got, there's an envelope from me, with my name on it, with my signature on it, and you get a bit excited, and as you open it, you wonder, I wonder if it is true, and you open it and there's a note from me which says, I'm really, really sorry, me, but I couldn't afford to give you what I promised, so here's a pound, your hope would be dashed, your hope would be put to shame, your hope would be shattered, disappointed, broken, how would you feel, well you would feel disappointed, but maybe not surprised, that when we get to heaven, it's not going to be like that, is it?

The hope that we place in the promise of God, of eternal life, when you get to heaven, the surprise is not going to be that it's not as good as you thought it would be, the surprise is going to be that is thousands of times better than you ever expected, that's what God's promise is like, it will be exactly as he says, but nobody in this world can possibly imagine what heaven is really going to be like, it's going to be far, far better than we can possibly understand in this life, in other words, God's promise to us is absolutely sure, God's promise Jesus is saying, whoever believes in me shall never die, that's the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, and that hope is not going to be put to shame, you're not going to get to heaven only to find disappointment, and your hope shattered, you're going to find it fully, fully, fulfilled, accomplished, realized, met, done, and it'll be far better than we ever expected.

That's the second best friend, the friend called hope. Now we have one more friend to think about, and that friend is love.

These are the three chief friends that the Bible speaks about in the life of God's people, three good friends, our three best friends, faith, and hope, and love.

Whoever comes to believe in Jesus, to trust their life to him, whoever comes to hope in God's promise, in the promise of Jesus about eternal life, these people will obviously love God, and they will love other people too.

[ 24 : 43 ] Because whenever we come to trust in Jesus, and have our life in his hands, we are going to love him for that. We are going to love him for everything that he has done for us to make that possible.

Love is something that you have in your heart, but that you show in your actions. Actions can be in the form of words, but especially other types of action that we take because love moves us to do things.

And this John, this writer John, when he wrote his first letter, his first epistle, he warned against thinking about love simply as words or just saying that we love people.

What he says is that we are to love not simply in word, but also in truth things and in actions.

When we love someone, we show our love for them. And we show our love for them by doing certain things that show we love them. It's not really enough to say, I do love you.

[ 26 : 00 ] We have to show that we love them. It's when we're bringing up children, we show our love for our children, not just by saying that we love them, we actually assure them that we do love them, and we need to say that in order to tell them that.

But really we prove that love by looking after them, by providing for them, by listening to them, by looking after their needs as far as we can, by praying for them, by having them brought up in the church such as you are yourselves doing with your children.

We show our love in action, in practice. And it's the same when we love God. We love God, and we love others as well as God.

That's what Jesus said, the commandments, the whole sum of the Ten Commandments, He said, you could sum it up like this, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

Love to God, love to other people. That sums up all the commandments. commandments. So love is a really, really important thing.

[ 27 : 11 ] It is one of our best friends. How then do we show our love for God? Well, we show our love for God in many ways. What sort of actions do we perform to show our love for God, to show that we love Him?

To tell Him that we love Him, we say so. We speak to Him in prayer, and we say that we love Him. And we tell Him why we love Him. And we're not afraid to tell Him that we love Him, because He has done so much for us, and especially He has done so much for us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

So we tell Him when we pray that we love Him. Like the psalmist in Psalm 116, I love the Lord. It's not a shame to say that, because He heard my voice and my prayers.

We love Him by telling Him. But we love Him too by actions, other than just speaking to Him, or telling others about Him. We love Him by respecting Him.

When we come to church on the Lord's Day, that's an expression of our love for God. And if we're not doing that regularly, like some people are not, then what that says about us is we don't really love God, even if we say we do.

[ 28 : 30 ] If we love God, we will love everything to do with respecting Him in the way that He tells us in His Word. That's why you children come to church, to Sunday school.

That's why we love to have you in the congregation, in the church, in Sunday school, in creche, in ABC, whatever else we do with young people, with children, we love to have you involved.

We love you to be part of the church and part of the congregation. Why? Because it really is about love to God. Because what you're learning is that it's important to love God and to receive God's love as He loves us in Christ.

So we respect Him, but not only in terms of worship, we respect Him in how we live in the world. That we don't do the things that He tells us are wrong and that we do do the things that He tells us are right.

We don't join ourselves with practices that hate God, that speak badly about God, that blaspheme God. It doesn't mean we don't talk to such people, we have to tell them about God, we have to tell them about the truth of the Bible, but we don't get involved in activities that we know are wrong and that God says are wrong.

[ 29 : 50 ] Otherwise, we don't really love Him, even if we say we do. We respect Him, and that means we respect His name and His reputation. And when people say bad things about Him, we come to His defense, we speak up in His name.

Not that God can't look after Himself, of course He can, but He's given us responsibility, even as young people, to actually say when God's name is taken in vain, when we're given responsibility to say, you know, that's not right, I think that is disrespectful of God.

And there are so many different ways in which we show our love for God. Jesus actually said in John chapter 14, if you love me, you will keep my commandments, and I will ask the Father and He'll give you another helper, that was going to be the Holy Spirit.

And then He went on to say, whoever has my commandments and keeps them, He it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest or show myself to him.

And Judas said to him, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the word? And Jesus answered, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

[ 31 : 15 ] Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. Now there's a wonderful promise again from God, if we love him and keep his word, in other words, if we obey him, if we are true to what he says, he will come and make his home with us.

He will live with us in our lives. What a great thing that is, to have God living with you in your heart, in your life, in everything you do. That he follows you, that he's with you, that he's beside you, that he's in charge of your life, that he's actually in your very heart.

That's what God is saying happens when we love him sincerely, when we have love as our best friend. But it's not just love to God, it's love to other people as well.

You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbour as yourself. And we prove our love for other people especially by caring for them and caring about them.

That's not just to do with times when they are ill or recovering from illness or have a crisis in their lives, have a bereavement in their family. All of these are ways by which we show our love practically to people in supporting them.

[ 32 : 33 ] But like with God, so we also show our love to people in supporting them when we need to defend them, when things are spoken against them wrongly, when they're attacked by people that hate them and we know that what they're saying about them is wrong, then we come to their help, we come to their support, we care for their reputation, we care for them as people like ourselves who need a reputation to be protected.

There are all kinds of other ways as well that we actually show our love for people. but one thing that Jesus mentioned, and especially it's in Matthew chapter 5, you can read about it in Matthew 5 when you get home.

One of the things that he said there, which is a very, very difficult thing for us to do, he said that we have to love even our enemies. Even our enemies.

Because for one thing, that's what God did with us. We were not best friends with God when he loved us and sent Jesus into the world.

We were his enemies in our hearts. We were not in love with him. He won our hearts over through what he did in Jesus. He loved us when we were still enemies.

[ 33 : 58 ] Loved us enough to send his son to die that death of the cross. In other words, everyone who loves God, is themselves a kind of small miniature of love that is an exact image of the love of God.

And we want more and more to see myself and yourselves like that. To love God and to love others in the way that God has loved us. When Jesus washed the feet of the disciples in John 13, he asked them a question.

Do you know what I have done to you? And he answered it for them. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

There is a great challenge for us, all the time for us. How do we love one another? How do we show it in more than just saying that we do?

We show it by our actions. by everything possible in love for those that we need to love. And that includes even our enemies, these people who hate us, even if they hate us for being Christians.

[ 35 : 14 ] Three best friends, faith, hope, and love. But they are not the best friend of all.

none of these three and not these three together can possibly be the best friend for us. Because the best friend is Jesus himself.

You don't trust yourself to faith. You don't trust yourself to hope. You don't trust yourself to love. They are very important friends.

But you trust yourself to Jesus. Jesus. He is the best friend of all. That's why we need him.

And why having him is the most important thing to have. Because he, as your best friend, will always look after you.

[ 36 : 19 ] And that will never end. Whoever lives and believes in me, shall never die. We will come, my father and I, and make our home with him.

And that will go on forever. So Jesus, the best friend of all. love him. Bye, and I, and I, and I, and I, and I, and I, and I'll see you next time and things with Paulseovich.

I think I'll have a great day so I felt