

Baptism Service

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[0 : 00] Well, for a short while I'd like us to turn back to the passages that we read in Matthew chapter 18 and 19.

Now we'll be mentioning all the passages that we read, but we can just focus and read again the words that we read to the children in Matthew chapter 19, verse 13.

Then children were brought to Jesus that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.

And he laid his hands on them and went away. Now both this passage here and the passage at the beginning of chapter 18 are wonderful passages for children.

And in many ways they teach our children so many wonderful things. And as we were saying to the children, one of the great things that these verses emphasize is the fact that children have a place in God's kingdom.

[1 : 18] And children are welcome. Children are special. Children are incredibly, incredibly important. So these passages teach our children many, many precious truths.

But the main point of Matthew chapter 18, verses 1 to 6, and the main point of Matthew chapter 19, verses 13 and 15, is not to teach children.

The main point is to teach grown-ups. And what Jesus is saying is that we are to be taught by children.

If we are going to understand the kingdom of God properly, we have got lessons that we as grown-ups have to learn from our children.

And so whilst these verses teach our children many things, the main point is that we adults must be taught by children.

[2 : 33] And we must not miss just how incredibly important that is. Because here and throughout the Gospels, Jesus is talking about the kingdom of God. He's talking about God's intervention into the world and the fact that God has got a message of restoration.

God has come with good news to give a sinful and broken world hope. And in doing that, God is presenting the most important message that mankind has ever heard.

And these things that we are discussing today are the most important things that we could ever, ever think about. Now, we have all probably had important things in our lives during the past week. And there will probably be important things that lie ahead of us in the next few days. But nothing, nothing is as important as this.

Nothing is as important as the message of the Gospel. And Jesus is telling us that if we, if you are going to understand this message, you need to learn some lessons from children.

[3 : 48] And so that means that when we are asking the most important questions in life, we've got to learn from the example of a child. And so what I want us to do today is just ask three questions.

Three simple questions, but three incredibly important questions. And these are, first of all, how do we come to God? How is it that we are to approach God?

How do we relate to God, secondly? What is our relationship, our connection to God? And then thirdly, how do we please God? Now, these are three of the most important questions you could ever ask.

And they are questions that we've got to think about. And they're questions that we've got to get right. How do we come to God? How do we relate to God?

How do we please God? These are among the most important questions that we will ever ask. And we need to try and find the answers together today.

[4 : 52] So, first of all, how do we come to God? How are you to come to God? And as I said, this is one of the most important questions we can ever ask.

Every single week, if you sit under the gospel, in this congregation or in any other, you are going to hear a call to come to God. People, preachers, are telling you to come to God.

And this is because the fundamental problem that we have as humans is that sin has left us alienated from God. That means that we are separated from God. Remember back in the Garden of Eden, when Adam sinned, one of the very first things that happened was that he was separated from God's presence.

He was driven out of the Garden. And now there is this alienation between God and humanity. And the amazing message of the Bible is that God is calling people back.

We are not naturally close to God anymore. We are not born close to God anymore. We are born separated. But God is calling us back. And that's what we mean when we use the word repent.

[6 : 01] Again and again you'll hear the word repent being used in church services like this. And basically it means to turn around and go back. To return to God.

That's Jesus' message. He began his ministry. He came into Galilee, Mark's gospel tells us, proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent. Repent. And believe in the gospel. So if you are going to be a Christian, you've got to repent. But the vital question that we have to ask is, Well, how do you do that?

How do you repent? And Jesus is telling us that the answer is to do it like a child.

That's what we read in Matthew chapter 18. You can turn back from verse 1. At that time the disciples came to Jesus saying, Who's the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

[7 : 16] Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Now this is so important because it's something that so many people get wrong.

And in the passages that we read in these two chapters, chapter 18 and chapter 19, there are people who are getting it wrong. The disciples themselves are getting it wrong here.

It tells us in verse 1 that they are fussing about who is the greatest. Who's the most important? And they're thinking, Which one is it? Is it me? Am I the most important of the disciples? Who's the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

We didn't read it, but at the start of chapter 9, the Pharisees came up to Jesus in order to test him. And again, they were getting it wrong. They were coming up to Jesus thinking, Well, we better test this guy.

Let's see if we can catch him out. They were trying to stand over Jesus in judgment. And then we read at the end of chapter 19 about the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and was boasting about all his own achievements.

[8 : 17] I've done this. I've done that. I've kept all the commandments. And the key point is that all of these people were getting it wrong.

And it's really, really interesting to notice that in Matthew chapter 19, verses 13 to 15, you've got children who come to Jesus.

And then immediately after that, you've got a man, a grown-up coming to Jesus. And he's the one who's got it all wrong.

He's the one, not the children, who is confused and not understanding things. And so Jesus is telling us the way that we come to God is as a child.

And he emphasizes in Matthew 18 that at the heart of that is humility. whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

[9 : 15] Now the word humble is a really important word. And it's a very simple word because basically all it means is to be low. The word humble is the idea of being low down.

And that's how God wants us to come to him as those who are humble, as those who are low. And again, we can get this wrong so easily because so many people think to themselves, I need to improve myself before I can become a Christian.

I need to improve myself before I can become a member of the church. I need to improve myself before I go to the prayer meeting. Other people think to themselves, well, I don't really need to kind of do the whole repenting thing because I'm good enough already.

I think I'm all right. I'm sure I'm up to the standard. And other people can compare themselves to other ones and say, well, I'm not perfect, but I'm not like him. Or I'm not like her. And it's so, so easy to think like that and maybe you think like that a little bit today. But the key point is that all of these things are upward efforts, aren't they? We're trying to put ourselves upward by saying, well, I've got to make myself better.

[10:24] Or by saying, well, I'm better than that person. Or I'm not too bad. That's all upward efforts. And yet Jesus wants the opposite. He wants us to be humble.

He wants us to be low. He wants us to come with empty hands, to come with all our weakness, to come with all our vulnerability.

And that's exactly how a child is. A young child doesn't come to their parents with a long list of achievements saying, I've done this, I've done that, I've done this.

A young child just comes to their parents as they are, with empty hands and in humble reliance. And that's how God wants you to come to him.

And for any person who feels that they are not good enough for God, you have got the number one qualification for becoming a Christian. an awareness of the fact that you're not good enough.

[11:31] That's why we need Jesus. And that's exactly how God wants us to come to him. Jesus says again and again, many who are first will be last and the last first.

Now it's really, really interesting to notice that there's a fundamental difference between children and adults. And it's a difference that we must all recognize. If you look at a child, children don't often know what they need.

Sometimes a baby might be really, really hungry and they might be crying with pain, with hunger. And their mother will try and give them food and they refuse it because they're so upset.

It's what they need but they don't know what they need. They don't realize it. Very often a child will not know what they need. But a child always knows who they need.

They need their mum or their dad. And so a child might not understand the intricacies of hunger and all the physiology involved with that.

[12:44] A child might not understand why they feel scared or what it is that's making them feel vulnerable. But a child knows who they need. They need their mum and their dad.

But adults are the opposite very often. Because adults will know what they need. An adult knows that they need companionship.

An adult knows that they need nourishment. An adult knows that they need friendship. An adult knows that they need satisfaction in terms of their achievements.

An adult knows what they need. But they don't realize who they should go to. And that's why we see so many adults going to the wrong place for what they need.

An adult knows that they need confidence. alcohol and yet they'll go to alcohol to give it to them. An adult knows that they need companionship and yet they'll go to the wrong relationship to find it.

[14:00] An adult knows that they need security and yet they'll go to possessions to try to find it. And the key thing we have to learn is that we must recognize as adults who it is we need.

We need Jesus. We might be good at recognizing what we need, but so often we miss who it is who will really meet our needs.

So how do we come to God as a child? The second question we are going to ask is how do we relate to God? Yes, we have to come to God, but then once we come to God, what kind of relationship do we have with him?

What kind of connection do we have with God? If you are a Christian or if you become a Christian, what is going to be your relationship with God? In other words, when you think of God, what do you think of?

And the answer to that question is again given to us by children. Because if you are a Christian, first and foremost, God is your father.

[15:20] When Jesus says, let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven, he is giving a wonderful invitation to children, but he is also pointing us to one of the most fundamental and wonderful truths of the Christian message.

he is telling us that if we put our trust in Jesus, we are adopted as the children of God. If you are a Christian, first and foremost, God is your father.

And that's the kind of thing that's really easy to say, but it's actually very hard to grasp. And I want you to try and stretch your minds and to think about all that means, to say that God is your father.

It is absolutely incredible. It means that as God's child, you are loved with a special love. As John says in his first letter, chapter 3, verse 1, see what kind of love the father has given to us, that we should be called children of God.

And so we are. Now, you have probably heard many times that God loves you. But have you ever asked the question, what kind of love does God love you with?

[16:39] Does he love you in a kind of general kind of love? Does he love you in a sort of slightly fond kind of love? People love the mod? The mod has been on?

People love the mod? Is that the kind of love that God has? People love Lewis? Is that the kind of love that God has? Is it a kind of general, fairly neutral kind of love?

What kind of love a father's love. The love of the most devoted, dedicated, committed father.

Now, every morning that you wake up, I want you to remember that. To remember that God loves you as your father.

That is the kind of love that God has for you. The most precious, committed love. And as God's children, we are under God's care.

[17:44] Notice what Jesus says in Matthew 6, verse 8. Your father knows what you need before you ask him. Notice he doesn't say God knows what you need because he is the supreme being and he knows everything.

He says your father knows what you need because as your father, he loves you. As your father, he cares for you.

Now, anybody here who's a dad will know a little of what that's like. You want to care for your children. You want to look after them. You want to provide for their every need.

And God is exactly the same. He is exactly the same. And as a father or as a mother, you will also know that sometimes that means giving.

And God gives us many, many wonderful things. But sometimes it also means withholding, doesn't it? As a parent, you don't give your children everything.

[18:44] Very often you keep things back because you know that it's in their best interests. And God is the same. Often people are frustrated with God because things they've wanted haven't happened.

That's not because God doesn't care. It's because he does. And at all times, in every single way, God cares about every aspect of your lives.

Now, please, please stretch your minds to see the vastness of that. Every detail of your life. If you wake up tomorrow morning and the thought of going to work just makes your heart sink, and you know that there's going to be a huge pile of emails in your inbox, or a huge pile of issues that you have to deal with, or a huge stress waiting for you at work, God cares.

And God will help you. If you are worried about your family, if you've got concerns about your children, or about elderly relatives, or about people who are dear to you, who you know are in difficulty, God cares as well.

God cares. If you are worrying, if you are nervous, if you are weak, God cares. Your father knows what you need before you ask him.

[20:10] Have you ever noticed that if you look through the Bible, you will often find a wonderful prayer? Sometimes we don't know what to pray, but there's a wonderful prayer in the Bible, and it's only two words long.

So it's a really easy prayer to remember, but it's an amazing prayer. You know. You see people come to God, and they're in difficulty, and they say, Lord, you know.

And if you are struggling, if you are weak, if you've got things that are weighing down on you, just bow your head and say, Lord, you know.

It's one of the best prayers you can ever pray. Your father knows what you need before you ask him. And as God's children, we have an incredible wealth of privileges, because we're part of his family.

Romans chapter 8 is one of the great passages to go. If you want to learn about these privileges, we can read a few verses from verse 15. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you've received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

[21:27] The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

To have God as your father means that you are now entitled to an astounding wealth of privileges. And this is so important because you must never, ever, ever think that Christianity is only offering you a little.

Never think that Christianity is offering you a little. Because the gospel is not calling you to be a member of this church. church.

The gospel is not calling you to be somebody who can put the label Christian over them. The gospel is not calling you to be some person who conforms to a certain cultural or traditional standard.

The gospel is not calling you to just be another number in this congregation. The gospel is calling you to be a child of God.

[22 : 35] And that is the greatest privilege that anyone can have. And that's why Jesus said the last shall be first.

Those who are weak, those who are humble, those who come to God knowing that they can't offer him anything, they are going to be first. You are first in God's sight if you are trusting in Jesus because he's calling you to the highest level of privilege.

The one who comes to God with the humility of a child becomes the one who has all the preciousness of a child. And this is one of the amazing things that we see when we look at Jesus.

When you look at Jesus you see so many amazing things. You see Jesus as this incredible example of perfect moral conduct. You see Jesus as this amazing demonstration of love.

You see Jesus as this wealth of amazing wisdom. Jesus is all of these wonderful things. But one of the things that Jesus is, is that he is a forerunner.

[23 : 44] He is one who goes ahead of us. But Jesus doesn't go ahead of us in order to leave us behind. Jesus goes ahead of us in order to bring us with him.

So that we too will share in all that he has. And that's the amazing thing that's revealed in John chapter 17 where Jesus prays to the Father. And the incredible thing about John 17 is that it gives us this insight into Jesus' relationship with his Father.

You see that God the Father and God the Son love each other in this incredible relationship. There is this depth of bond between God the Father and God the Son.

and we read about it when Jesus prays to his Father and he talks about he says I in them and you in me that they may be perfectly one so the world may know that you've sent me and love them even as you love me.

Father I desire that they also whom you've given me may be with me where I am to see my glory that you've given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Now that's amazing.

[24 : 48] It's talking about this love that God the Father and God the Son has. But what is maybe even more amazing is that Jesus is saying I want you to have that relationship with God too.

Oh righteous Father even though the world does not know you I know you and these know that you have sent me. I have made known to them your name and I will continue to make it known that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them.

Do you see what that is saying? It's amazing. You think of everything that Jesus is to his Father.

You think of how much God the Father loves God the Son. You think of how precious Jesus is.

That is the level that Jesus wants you to be at as well. Jesus wants you to share in that preciousness.

Jesus wants you to be that precious to God. That's why it says that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters because we are that precious to God.

[26 : 03] And if anybody is wondering whether they matter to God, if anybody is wondering whether God cares about them, I hope that you can see that. The gospel does not promise you a little.

It promises you the highest, highest level of privilege. You are God's own child if you trust in Jesus. Now when we describe God as Father, we can use many, many wonderful adjectives. We could say loving Father.

We could say gentlest Father. We could say patient Father. We could say strongest Father. We could say wisest Father.

We could say kindest Father. We could say greatest Father. All of these adjectives are absolutely true and they're teaching us wonderful things about the fatherhood of God. But I think the most amazing adjective that we can use in terms of God as Father is the one which we use at the very

beginning of the Lord's Prayer.

[27 : 12] Our Father. God himself is our Father. And so if you ask the question how do we relate to God how does the Christian relate to God just think of a child who is utterly loved by their dad.

Our third question is how do we please God? And this again is a really really important question. Sometimes in life we know that the relationship between parents and children is not what it should be.

Sometimes the relationship breaks down. Sometimes families struggle. Sometimes things fall apart. And things are not lived out in the way that they should be. And that is a desperate tragedy.

And I know that that may well be the experience of some people here and that is incredibly hard. But if things are the way they are meant to be, and if things are the way that God wants them to be, then in our relationship with our parents, we should live in a way that pleases them.

As children, we should live in a way that pleases our parents. And the same principle applies to God. If we ask the question, how do we relate to God, how do we please God, the answer is again found by looking at a child.

[28 : 47] And I want to just say two things briefly regarding this. How do you please God? If you want to please God today, how are you going to do it? Well, there's two vital things. First of all, dependence.

At the heart of a relationship between a parent and a child is dependence. dependence. If you look at any child, especially a very young one, they are totally dependent on their parents.

For nourishment, for learning, for protection, for growth, they are all, all totally dependent on their parents.

And any of you who have had young babies will know that that's absolutely true. They're totally dependent on you. And the key point in all of this is that God wants us to depend on him.

In fact, God is glorified when we depend on him. Because when we depend on God, we are saying that he is God, that he is our rock, that he is our strength, that he is our father, and that we are dependent children.

[30 : 02] God wants us to depend on him. And it's so important that we grasp this because it's so easy to get this wrong. Because a lot of people don't want to depend on God or on anybody else.

And a lot of people think that the greatest expression of humanity is to be self-reliant. And if you look back in the Bible, you see that that happened, especially in the Old Testament. The people of Israel constantly wanted to show God that they didn't depend on him, that they didn't need him. Hosea 11 verse 1 is a good example. When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. This is God speaking. But then verse 2 says, the more they were called, the more they went away.

They kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. God wanted them to depend on him, but they just kept pushing him away. And some people think that we need to prove our independence to God.

The rich young ruler that we read about in Matthew 19 is a classic example of that. He's coming to God and basically saying, I don't need you because I'm doing all this. I deserve eternal life because I am everything that I need to be.

[31 : 12] He tried to prove his independence to God. And it's very, very easy for us to be like that as well. God is to be like God.

But the truth is that if we are Christians or if we become one, then with God as our Father, he wants us and he expects us to depend on him.

Now, sometimes I'm one of these people who, you know, you try to, if you make a mistake or if you're not doing very well, you try to cover it up.

You think, oh, I've done that wrong. And you try to cover it up because you think, I don't want to show my weakness, I want to hide it. But that's the opposite of how God wants us to be.

God wants us to come and say that we need him. No parent would ever want their child to say to them, I don't need you. And God is no different. God wants us all to depend on him.

[32 : 15] So, if you're asking the question, how do I please God, the first answer is to say, by depending on him. But the second thing is that not only is dependence at the heart of a parent-child relationship, also at the heart of that relationship is obedience.

Obedience. A child should obey their parents. And that's not because the child is a slave.

It's because the child is precious. And because the parents know best. Our children are not to obey us because we want to boss them about, because we want them to do stuff for us and to make our lives easier.

We don't want our children to obey us for that reason. We want our children to obey us because we care about them and because we know what's best. And this is something that we must grasp in terms of God because God has given us instruction.

He's given us his law. And a lot of people think that God has given us his law because he is a harsh taskmaster. People think that about God.

[33 : 34] God's law is the wise and good. He's just waiting for us to get it wrong. And he's watching over us ready to pounce when we make a mistake.

But that is a completely false understanding of God. God's law is not the brutal expectation of a harsh taskmaster. God's law is the wise and caring instruction of an utterly loving father.

And this is where the world has got it so, so wrong. People think that God's law is a bad thing.

People think that God's law is a restricting thing. That it's an unwanted limitation on my life.

And we've seen that so clearly in the example of Sundays. I think Sundays is one of the clearest examples of this. People look at Sundays and they think it's so restrictive. It's so harsh.

What a horrible God doing this to us. Restricting what we can do on a Sunday. And yet Sundays are amazing. We live in a world where nobody has enough time.

[34 : 53] Nobody has enough time for their wife. Nobody has enough time for their children.

Nobody has enough time to exercise. Nobody has enough time to read. Nobody has enough time to look at the world and to enjoy it.

Nobody has time. And God from the very beginning of creation has given us time. Time to rest.

Time to stop.

Time to enjoy and glorify him. Sundays are an incredible gift. And yet the world thinks that it's harsh.

The world thinks that it's a restriction. And it's going to be so tragic that if we do end up losing our Sunday here, people are going to realize, oh, Sundays were great when we had them.

But anyway, that's me. I'm getting on my high horse here with Sundays. Always remember that though. If you're talking to anybody about a Sunday, don't say to them, you know, you are going to be judged because of your view on Sundays, tell them that Sundays are a good thing.

[36 : 00] Sundays are an amazing thing. God's law is perfect. The good news is good news. God's ways are the best ways.

And I noticed there was an article on the Telegraph website, which I don't usually go on, but I saw it providentially, where it said that an office of national statistics said that the outer Hebrides is the happiest place to live in the whole of Britain.

The happiest place. And I think that's probably because we have one day a week where we're able to be together, and slow day. By becoming like the world, we don't make things better, we make things worse.

But anyway, I said I would stop on that one. The world thinks that God's law is a restriction, but God's law is a statement of loving protection.

If you imagine Nicholas, I must use his proper title, Nicholas, I'm not referring to him as Nuck. If you imagine when Sadie is a wee bit bigger, and she says to him, Dad, I want to go down to Bayhead Playpark.

[37 : 07] And he said, okay. Now they live on Leverhulme Drive, so Nuck would say to Sadie, okay, right, you're going to go down onto the pavement, watch before you cross the road on Leverhulme Drive, check that there's no car, make sure you go straight across onto the pavement.

When you go down to Matheson Road, go to the traffic lights, press the button, make sure you wait until the green man shows and it beeps, and you can cross the road. Then when you go down Stag Road, make sure you turn left and go along until you find another set of traffic lights, and so that you can press the button again, wait for the cars to stop, go across, and stay on the pavement all the way to the play park.

When you get to the play park, if you see anything dodgy there, if you see broken glass or anything like that, make sure you keep away from it. If you see any children misbehaving, make sure you stay away, and when you come home, make sure you do everything that I said again and come safely across the road.

Now if you saw that happening, would you say, oh well, Nuck is so narrow-minded, he's so harsh, he's so restrictive?

You'd never say that. You'd say, he loves his weak girl, and he wants to make sure she's safe. And that is exactly why God gave us his law.

[38 : 28] Because he loves us. Because he wants what's best for us. And that's why if we are going to please God, we are going to obey his law.

And never ever think to yourself, oh if I become a Christian, I can just forget about God's law because I'm forgiven anyway. That is the most awful, awful, distortion of the gospel. We are saved in order to live as God's people.

And part of that is obeying his instruction for our lives. And obeying God is a wonderful statement of trust, because you're saying to God, you know best, and I want to listen to you.

And it's in obedience to God that we find true freedom, and true joy, and true peace in our lives.

God wants us to trust him, God wants us to have faith in him, and a key part of that is obeying him, and depending on him.

So if we ask the question, how do we please God as a dependent child, and as an obedient child?

So we've asked three of the most important questions you could ever ask.

[39 : 43] How do we approach God? The answer is as a child, with empty hands. How do we relate to God as a child who loves their father, and who is loved by him?

And how do we please God as a child? depending on him, and obeying him. We have got a lot that we can learn from children, because the gospel is as simple as that.

Do you want to be a Christian today? Do you want to be a child of God? Do you want to know his salvation in your life? will come to him as a child?

Amen. Let us pray. Lord, our God, we thank you that you are our loving heavenly father.

God, we are our father. We are our needs before we even ask, you know. And as our father, you care, and you will never stop caring.

[41 : 10] And as our father, that means that we are your. And we pray that that will be true of every one of us, that your spirit would be moving in the hearts of each one of us, and that every single one of us would cry out to you, and come to you as a child.

And we pray to you that we would go on living our lives as dependent children, and as obedient children. Please forgive us for when we so often think that we know best, and for when we so often think that we don't need you.

But help us every day to go through it with your name on our lips, and just always always saying Father, help me, Father guide me, Father be with me.

May that be our whole world view, that may that be the rock on which our lives are built. So please lead us on as your children to your glory.

In Jesus name, Amen. Amen. We're going to sing to God's praise now in the Scottish Psalter on Psalm 127.

[42 : 35] Psalm 127 on page 420. Except the Lord to build the house, the builders lose their pain. Except the Lord the city keep, the watchmen watch in vain.

Tis vain for you to rise betimes or late from rest to keep. To feed on sorrow's bread, so gives he his beloved sleep. Lo, children are God's heritage, the womb's fruit his reward, the sons of youth as arrows are for strong men's hands prepared.

O happy is the man that hath his quiver filled with those, the unashamed in the gate shall speak unto their foes. We'll stand to sing to the tune, Mark Psalm 127 to God's praise.

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Except the Lord to He is a watchman watch in him.

[43 : 51] There's pain for you to rise, he dies, or wait from rest to be.

You leave on sorrow's breath so much, he is beloved seed.

O children, I'm not telling you, I've moved to this reward.

The sons of youth, the tarot are, for strong men's hands be here.

O papi is a man that has, it's with a full of those.

[45 : 08] They are not shaken in the gate, shall speak unto their host.

Well, it's nice to see you all. A warm welcome to the children who've come in. It's great to have you here with us. I'm just going to say a few words before then coming down for the baptism.

Because it's good for us just to think about what we're doing and why we are doing it. And one of the things that I want us to do is just to think about the whole message of the Bible.

This is something that's really, really important for us to do. Sometimes we can often spend time looking very closely at one part of the Bible, or at one verse, or maybe even at one word.

But it's also really important to take a step back and to look at the whole Bible, to think in terms of biblical theology, of the message that goes from the beginning to the end.

[46 : 16] Because there is one great message running all the way through from Genesis, all the way through to Revelation. And so this one message, in many ways it all fits together beautifully.

And one of the ways in which it fits together is under the great heading of family. You can summarize the whole of the Bible's message under the heading family.

Because if you go through it again and again and again, you see family events, family details, family promises.

And I'm going to go through this very, very quickly. We're going to go through the whole Bible in two minutes. Let's see if we can get through it. But you go, at the very start, you've got Adam and Eve.

What do they do immediately? They are joined as husband and wife.

A family. They're told to have children, to grow as a family. And so that's how things were meant to be. God with his people, with his perfect family. But of course, sin came into the world, as we know.

[47 : 19] And Adam disobeyed God. But God responded to that by giving a promise. And the promise is found in Genesis 3.15. And part of that promise is a family promise.

We call it the seed promise. Because God says to the serpent that there will be enmity, conflict, between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. And eventually, the seed of the woman will crush the head of the seed of the serpent.

And so, God's purposes are going to be fulfilled through family. And that's exactly what happens.

Because when you go along in the Bible, you see that God comes to Abraham. And God gives Abraham a family promise.

Abraham had no children. But God says, you're going to have children. And through this promised child, I'm going to fulfill my purposes. And that's exactly what happened. He had children. And the family grew. And the family grew so big that it became a nation.

And it was called Israel. Named after Abraham's grandson, Jacob. The whole nation of Israel was one big family. They were divided into 12 tribes.

[48 : 21] But they were all connected together. One big family nation. And throughout the whole of the Old Testament, we see this family nation's experience. But as we know, the ultimate story was one of failure.

But in the New Testament, Jesus has come to put everything right. And Jesus has come to fulfill all the promises of the Old Testament.

And at the heart of Jesus' message are two great family doctrines. One is what we looked at together. Adoption.

That's a family doctrine. We become the children of God. The other is what we call union with Christ. Whereby, by trusting in Jesus, we are united to him in a marriage, if you like.

Jesus is the bridegroom. We as the church are his bride. God is our father. Jesus is our brother.

And everything fits together under this wonderful heading of family.

[49 : 23] And so family is at the heart of God's purposes. Family is at the heart of God's plan. And that's why, as Christians, we put the sign of God's covenant promises onto our children.

We put the sign of baptism onto the children of those who are trusting in Jesus Christ. Because family is at the heart of God's plan, of God's purposes.

These promises are for us and for our children. So the whole Bible message is summed up really under the heading family. And if you go to Revelation, you see a beautiful marriage supper where our bond with Jesus is perfectly consummated.

And where we are in the presence of our Father forevermore. And I want us just to read a few words from Acts chapter 2 as a warrant for what we're going to do today.

So we're going to read from Acts chapter 2. And we're going to read verses 22 to 39. This is Peter's sermon at Pentecost. And where he is presenting the message of the gospel to those who heard him.

[50 : 31] And he relates it back to all the family promises of the Old Testament. And to all that was being fulfilled in Jesus Christ. So Acts chapter 2 from verse 22.

Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

As you yourselves know, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, but he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced. My flesh also will dwell in hope.

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your Holy One see corruption. You've made known to me the paths of life. You will make me full of gladness with your presence.

[51 : 31] Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins.

And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off.