

Baptism Service

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: 30 October 2011

Preacher: Rev Iver Martin

[0 : 0 0] faith, we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things that were visible and so on. And then the chapter goes on to describe the lives of Abel and Abraham and Moses and so on, all of these people who lived by faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ, although he hadn't quite been revealed at that time. And the verses that I want us to look at in verse 23, verse 23, here they are, by faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents because they saw that the child was beautiful and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. Now, there are very few people, if any, who haven't heard or don't know the story of the birth of Moses and what he did, rather what his parents did when he was born. And this is a chapter written in the New Testament that just summarizes what it was and why it was that his parents hid him from the danger of the army of Egypt. And it's what we call one of the birth narratives of the Bible. There are many, many stories in the Bible that record the birth of famous people, and this is one of them. And I want us to just look at these verses for a few moments. In the context of what we're doing today in administering the sacrament of baptism, to ask what they teach us about a child's upbringing, and particularly a covenant child's upbringing, because that is what each of these parents are doing. They're bringing their children under the covenant, and they're placing the sign of the covenant on their child. Now, I know that we have an adult who wishes to profess his faith, and of course that is one of the ways in which we administer the sacrament of baptism. And if anyone thinks that we don't believe in adult baptism, that's not true. We do believe when a person hasn't been baptized before, and when that person in adulthood wishes to express or profess his faith in Christ, the first thing that happens is that person is baptized, as it did in the New Testament.

But we also believe that we ought to place the sign of the covenant on our children. And by so doing, we are following what we believe that the Bible teaches. And it's in that context I want us to look at this and how this passage helps us to understand what a child is, what his relationship to his parents or her parents is, and how God perceives them as a person made in his image. And we're also going to be seeing the choices that that child has to make, perhaps in later life. And the greatest of these choices, of course, the one in which we are most concerned about is his relationship to the Lord through Jesus Christ. I want us to look at five Ps. Five Ps. I want us to look for initially at the perception with which the parents of Moses saw their child. And then I want us to look at the protection that the parents of Moses gave their child. Thirdly, I want us to look at the provision which the parents of Moses gave to their child Moses. Then I want us to look at the providence of God and how that providence worked out in Moses' life in later life. And then fifthly and lastly,

I want us to look at the preference which Moses exercised in later life, in adulthood, when he chose to reject the lifestyle of the Egyptians and all the treasures and the riches that he could have had in order to suffer with the people of God. I want very quickly to go through these five things, as I hope they'll help us to understand who we are and where we are today in relation to the sacrament.

And of course, the sacrament always points to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are always wrong when we think of baptism as being some kind of mysterious, superstitious rite that we place on our children in order to make sure that they go to heaven. It's no such thing. In fact, I will even go as far as this. Baptism is not about children. It's not about, it's not focused on the babies.

It's focused on Jesus. The message of baptism is the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the message of the Bible. Everything in the Bible, it points to Jesus coming into the world, and that's what the Christian faith is all about. It's about our relationship to Jesus. It's not about what church you go to, and it's not about what you happen, what kind of rituals you may happen to go through, or what, it's not religion. No, you know, people are all, have all kinds of confusion about what religion is.

[5 : 42] Let me just put it this way. Religion is when we try and make our own way to God. Waste of time. The Christian faith is all about what God has done to make his way to where we are.

And that is what Jesus Christ did when he came into the world. Jesus came into the world in order to rescue us from our sinfulness and to give us new life, eternal life that goes beyond this life into heaven itself. And that's God's work. And baptism points to that work and to that truth and to that reality. And I hope, if nothing else today, that we come away today with a clearer view and an understanding of what Jesus came to do. If that happens, then this service will be most meaningful to every one of us. Let's look at these five Ps then. First of all, I want us to look at the perception with what, look at this verse, by faith, verse 23, when he was born, he was hidden for three months by his parents. Look at what it says. Because they saw that the child was beautiful.

Now, my first question when I read that is, well, that's kind of obvious, isn't it? I mean, any parent, whenever a child is born, any parent thinks their child is beautiful. So it's not surprising that we read that Moses' parents, they decided to hide him because they saw their child was beautiful.

I'm not sure what you think of beautiful baby competitions. I have to confess to you, I don't want to fall out with you, but I don't want to, I must confess with you, I don't like them. I mean, imagine today we were to have some kind of competition amongst the mothers and the fathers of these children. It would be absurd, wouldn't it? It would be wrong, wouldn't it? If nothing else, because every one of these babies is an absolute cracker. They are absolutely gorgeous. And they are even more gorgeous, whatever they are to us, they are even more gorgeous in the eyes and in the estimation of their parents. But I want to tell you this, that's not what this verse means. It wasn't that Moses' parents saw him and they thought, this is the most beautiful baby in the world, isn't he lovely? That's not what it means at all. Three times in the Bible, there's a reference to Moses' beauty. And look what it says. In Exodus chapter 2, they saw that he was a fine child. In Hebrews chapter 11, the verse that we read, they saw that he was a beautiful child. But we have to go to

Stephen in Acts chapter 7. When he's telling the same story, he explains what this means. Listen to what he says. At this time, Moses was born. He was beautiful in God's sight. Now that's different, isn't it, for a beautiful baby competition? It's one thing to have. And once again, it shows the difference between what we look at on the outside and what God looks at on the inside. In other words, what this means is that Moses' parents, both of them being Christians, worshipers of God, when this baby was born, it wasn't just a natural mother's and father's love and affection for their child, but they saw that something special, something glorious had happened.

[9 : 35] And that same glorious thing happens every time a baby is born. I've had the privilege six times of seeing a baby born. Many of you have also had that same privilege.

And there's something about seeing a baby being born into this world for the very first time that just reiterates. You can't explain it.

And you believe, even if it's for a split second, you believe in God. I hope there's more than a split second. There's something about that new life, that face, that personality, that person who's right there and who was in the womb a few minutes ago and who's now in the world that just stamps the knowledge of God in your consciousness.

And I'm sure that each one of these fathers, each one of these mothers, and every father and mother in this building today has had that experience.

And I want to encourage you to follow that experience because it's a right experience. It's God's way, one of God's many ways of reminding us of His reality and His wonder and His truth.

[11 : 01] But there's more to it than that. It's a reminder of the power of God It's a reminder of who we are. We are made in the image of God.

Even in a broken and in a fallen world, the Bible tells us that the world became separate through sin, but even in that broken and fallen world, we still have something of the image of God.

And that means that every human being, and I know how rebellious the human race has become, and yet there's still something, and you can see it in the face, in the action of a child, that says, I am made in the image of God.

But it's more than that. It tells us of the grace of God, the kindness of God. Is there any parent in here, when they first saw their child, that didn't think, I don't deserve this.

This is a privilege that I don't deserve. It makes you, it's one of the most humbling experiences that you can ever have. You feel that you're unworthy to have this experience.

[12 : 07] You feel, I can't cope with this. I can't do it. It's one of these things, it's a mystery to us. It blows us away. Rightly so. Because it's God telling us that He is gracious.

You see, we don't deserve what He gives us. We don't deserve any good thing that He gives us. And particularly this, when despite our rebellion against God and all that we have done, and we know what we've done against Him, and still, God blesses us.

He gives us things that we don't deserve. And so, that's what I believe it means when Moses, by faith, when he was brought into the world, they looked at him, and it wasn't just his loveliness, naturally.

It was, they saw what this child was in the eyes of God. And I hope that in the very first instance that all the fathers and mothers here today, plus everyone else who has brought their children for baptism, I hope that we have recognized, we have perceived what our children are in the eyes of God.

And I hope that we're reminded of how accountable we are to God for their upbringing. Every one of us who's had children, we're accountable to God for the way in which we bring up our children.

[13 : 29] I watched this week, I'm sure many of you watched Frozen Planet. Absolutely breathtaking. One of the things this week on Frozen Planet was how polar bears reproduce.

it showed you these great monstrous creatures coming together. And the male, he had to fight off rival males.

By the time he was finished, he was full, covered with blood. And the end of it showed the male and the female, they separated. One went one way and one went the other.

And David Attenborough said, the female will now have her cubs alone. And that reminded me when I saw that, that reminded me of how incredibly different human beings are.

For animals, it's just instinct. I know it appears that there is some measure of affection between a mother and her cubs, but for animals, it's just instinct.

[14 : 40] For humans, there is a sense of divine wonder. And rightly so, when we see a child being born into the world, it's not just the continuation of the human race, it is God doing something.

He is intruding in your family, in your home, and he is telling you once again, remember me, remember your creator.

So that's what Moses' parents saw when they saw, that's what they perceived. And of course, their natural first instinct was to give protection for their children, that's what, for their child in verse 23, by faith, when he was born, because they saw that he was beautiful in God's eyes.

They were not afraid of the king's edict by faith. Moses, what did they do? Well, everybody knows the story of how Moses' mother determined within herself that she was not, or at least she was going to try her very best, she was going to pull out all the stops and invest all her resources and what intelligence she had to make sure that Moses, when he was three months old and when he, I guess he was at the age where the soldiers might have been more likely to find him, we all know the story, how she made a basket for him.

A little ark is what it's called, a little ark made out of bulrushes and she put pitch on the ark, she placed him within the little ark and she put it in the waters of the Nile among the bulrushes and then she sent his sister to look after the little basket where Moses was.

[16 : 25] I still don't know by the way whether Moses' mother knew what was going to happen or whether she just did that by faith, it doesn't really matter whether she actually knew that this was the place where Pharaoh's daughter was going to come and where she was likely to find him, I'm not entirely sure of that, however, whatever it was, what she did was by faith but faith is not the person that says, oh well, whatever will be will be.

Faith does the very opposite and it takes every step and it uses every resource to do what is right and in this case what is right for the protection of our children and today God holds us accountable first and foremost for the protection of our children.

Remember, of course, thankfully, nowadays we don't have to face the danger of soldiers coming into our homes and taking away our children and throwing them to the crocodiles in the Nile and we're thankful for that but remember that the Bible is all about a spiritual battle.

Remember that in the Bible whenever an attempt was made to eradicate the children of Israel that standing behind that attempt was Satan himself. This was a spiritual war and Moses' mother and his father they recognized that there was a spiritual war and there is another kind of spiritual war that we have to face here in the 21st century in which the influences are just as powerful and just as deadly and they involve parents being just as shrewd and cunning and wise as Moses' parents were not in making a basket but in giving sensible strong protection to our children and the first way in which we do that we have to know the kind of world that we live in and the kind of influences that there are in this world.

I hear people saying sometimes well I'm going to let my child make his own decisions and that sounds so sensible doesn't it?

[18 : 50] After all who could criticise and it sounds as if your child will have a completely open mind and he will weigh up one thing and he will weigh up another thing and then he will make the best decision.

The problem is that human beings do not act like that and your children will not act like that because you don't act like that I don't act like that our choices are based upon the influences the strongest and most persuasive influences even wrong ones and it's our job as parents and it's our accountability as parents to make sure that we protect our children from the influences that we know are wrong and God will hold us accountable for that.

Do you know what your child is looking at the internet? Do you? Do you know the sites he visits? You sure?

I mean even the authorities tell us this. I'm not saying anything today that is necessarily extreme it is simply biblical common sense do you know what your children watch on TV when you decide to go out?

Do your children have access to late night TV or even earlier night TV? Do you know what they're watching? Are they always watching the kind of thing that you know is safe for them and you know is right for them and will be healthy for them if you live in a biblical home?

[20 : 33] You see that's where it comes down to the reality of keeping our vows. It's all very well standing here and I've done it myself standing in front of a big congregation and saying I promise to bring up my child in the instruction and the knowledge of Christ.

It's easy to say it. It's a different thing altogether to actually do it. And that's where we have to be alert just as alert as Moses' parents were.

And there are many, many other influences of that sort. The third thing was provision that Moses' parents made for him. They provided an education in their home.

It always intrigues me that when the daughter of Pharaoh came and decided it was agreed that he was going to be brought up in the palace.

That was after he was 10 years old which means that up until the point that he was 10 years old that he was brought up exclusively and entirely in his own home. And that means that the most formative years of his life were spent in his own home listening to his mother and his father.

[21 : 43] And I want to say that nothing has changed. What the child learns in his home that is going to be the greatest, the most powerful and the most lasting or it ought to be the most lasting influence in that child's life.

And that means again it's not going to happen naturally. It means that we have to put time and effort into the kind of environment that we bring up our children in their home particularly in their most formative years they made provision for his education.

and I often wonder what it must have been like for Moses having learned in the first ten years about the truth and the reality of the living God. All the stories that he would have been taught of how God had dealt with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob how he had created the world and how there was only one invisible God and then he goes to the palace at ten years old and he starts learning about Egyptian gods.

We'll come on to that in a few moments. What he must have, the kind of turmoil that must have been in his heart but yet by that time he had learned and he had been grounded in the truth of the living God.

Provision had been made for his education and that's one of our responsibilities as well. I know that we send our children to school but we must maintain, I believe, that it is right for parents, particularly Christian parents, to take an active interest, I don't mean a negative interest but an active interest in their child's education and I'm thankful for the environment that we live in, in Stornoway for example, where there is a general sympathy, so far, a general sympathy for the Christian faith.

[23 : 39] I'm thankful for that. But that doesn't mean that we as Christian parents can say, oh well, that's fine then, that's okay, let them get on with it. Why can't we be involved? The authorities tell us, they encourage us to be involved with our children's education in many, many different ways and I think that every opportunity should be taken as part of the provision because ultimately our child's upbringing and well-being, it depends on us as Christian parents.

We are accountable for that. they made provision for Moses' education. But having done all that, there came the time when they had to say goodbye to him.

And I guess that from the moment that he was 10 years old, that's a rather young age, but this is a unique story. It's hard for any parent to say goodbye to their children.

It usually happens in our culture, around about the age when they're about 17, 18, and when they perhaps go away to university or college or when they start an apprenticeship, there is a definite turning point.

That's a definite threshold. And once they cross over that threshold, they're kind of leaving the home. And that's a difficult time for any parent. It's a difficult, it's always an uneasy period or it's usually or sometimes, maybe I shouldn't generalize too much, but it's sometimes an uneasy period when a child is going through those years, those adolescent years, when they are trying to discover what it means to live as an adult and yet at the same time having to depend on their parents as well, asserting themselves and their adulthood, their maturity, and yet you know that that maturity has a long way to go.

[25 : 32] And there comes a time in every Christian parent's life when they have to leave their children to the providence of God. And that's what Moses' mother and father had to.

It may be when their children leave home. We have to leave things to the providence of God. But the same God who protected Moses when he was three months old and who ensured his safety and his education as he was growing up was the same God to whom Moses' mother and father could leave and commit their child knowing that that God was able to do more than we can ask or even think.

Please do not stop praying for your children when they leave home. What age are they? They're 18, 19, they've left home, you don't know what they're doing, you're worried about them, you don't know, you can't supervise them anymore.

I know you can't supervise them anymore. And there's some things they just have to learn by themselves. But you keep on praying, believing that the God of providence will order.

Do you know what providence is? It's the way that God orders every event that takes place. There's a great mystery to it. We can't explain the providence, the way in which God works in people's lives.

[26 : 58] But we believe it. we believe it and we lay hold on it and Christian parents have to lay hold upon it, particularly when their children leave home.

God will continue to uphold his plan and his plan. Sometimes, of course, there are things that happen that we can't explain. Sometimes our children are taken away from us.

And I have to say, I don't understand that. I don't understand why Andrew McLeod was taken away this week.

And I can't begin to imagine what his parents are going through. I have no answers. I have to leave it to the goodness somehow of God.

But then I want to finish this morning by talking about, because this verse carries on by speaking about the way in which Moses came to the point in his life where he had to choose.

[28 : 19] And I can imagine Moses, as he's trying to grapple with the Egyptian ways and the language and the culture and the clothes and the palace and what a difference.

His parents were poor. They lived probably in a small, humble hut somewhere and he's taken into this palace and he's clothed in all these fine robes and then he's taught the language and he's eating all this food that he's never even seen before.

He probably doesn't like half of it and the language he finds so difficult and then there's the gods. The religion is so strange to him and what's more it doesn't make sense to him.

But he knows year after year that he's being pulled in two different directions. One direction means that he's going to be the richest man in Egypt.

He's the prince of Egypt. And the other direction means that he's going to have to forsake and leave behind all his riches and his glory and his majesty if he is to choose to serve the living God.

[29 : 35] And this verse tells us that's what he did. That's what faith is. Faith is when you come to the point where you weigh up the two options and at the end of the day there are only two options.

And if you've never been to church before or if you're not in the habit of going to church can I just encourage you? Can I give you the warmest encouragement of the two?

To do two things. First of all to don't just make this a one-off. To keep on going to church because when you're going to church you're hearing the gospel. You're hearing God explain to you.

But the second thing to do is to do what Moses did. To weigh up for yourselves the options. Don't just ignore the question but ask yourself what is the truth?

When I look at the most basic, most important question in all the world which is how can I be right with God? There are all these voices telling me this is what you do, that's what you do.

[30 : 42] And all the time there is the voice of Jesus Christ that says this, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Will you please listen to that voice? Why should you listen to that voice? Because that voice comes from Jesus.

Why should you listen to Jesus? Because Jesus was a reality. He was a real person who did the most extraordinary things and he was the single most extraordinary person that ever walked the face of the earth.

And at the end of his 33 years in this world the crowds turned against him, they put him to death on a cross, but he rose from the dead. Here's the thing, he rose from the dead.

I want you to start there. Because that's what identifies Jesus as unique, completely unique. Because whatever the other voices are telling you, they don't have this.

[31 : 56] They don't have this man who rose bodily from the dead. And that to me, that's why I'm a Christian. Christian. That's why I'm a minister.

That's why I believe the Bible. I believe the Bible not because just I was brought up with it or because I was brought up in a Christian home, but I came to believe for myself that this Jesus Christ of Nazareth is what he says he was.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. And I want to challenge you today, especially those of you perhaps haven't given it much thought. I so encourage you to please make this your first priority to find out the truth of Jesus Christ for yourself.

May God bless his word. We're just going to sing. We're going to sing in Psalm 23. three