

Journeying with Jesus

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Preacher: Andrew Wingfield

[0:00] I'm fighting the battle you've already won. Good morning, everybody.

Good morning and a very warm welcome to Union Baptist Church.! Welcome to our service this morning. It's great to have you with us. Welcome especially if you're new to us, or if you're visiting today, or if we've not seen you for a while.

It's great to have you with us. My name's Andrew. I'm one of the pastors this morning. I'll be leading through our service this morning. We're at the end of our week of prayer that we've had over the last week.

Kicked off last Sunday, where we've been encouraging each other to go deeper in prayer, to spend more time in prayer, and to pray big. And during this service, we'll have the opportunity to share our experiences of the prayer week, and we'll also be sharing in communion together later on in the service.

The devotional prayers in the prayer guide for this last week were based on Ephesians 1, and I want to start by reading some of the first part of that book of Ephesians 1, which we looked at last week.

[1:04] It says this, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has given freely to us in the one he loves.

And he made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

That's God's big plan. And today we celebrate that he's chosen us to be part of that plan. Let's pray as we prepare to worship God for these amazing truths. Let's pray.

Lord God, we thank you for the time that we spent with you over the last week. Thank you for this time today that you've blessed us with. Thank you that you give us every spiritual blessing in Christ.

[2:09] We are so full of gratitude. We are so in awe of who you are and what you've done for us. And we want to sing to the praise of your glory, because you are so worthy. In Jesus name.

Amen. I invite you to stand as the music group lead us in son worship. Come praise and glorify our God, the Father of the Lord.

In Christ he has in heavenly realms his blessings on us before. For pure and blameless in his sight he destined us to be.

Now we've been adored through his son is ruling. To the praise of your glory, to the praise of your mercy and grace, to the praise of your glory, you are the God who saves.

Come praise and glorify our God, the grace of grace in Christ. In him our sins are washed away, redeemed through sacrifice.

[3:54] In him your life is done to us, the mystery of his will, and what should be the head of all his purpose to fill.

To the praise of your glory, to the praise of your mercy and grace, to the praise of your glory, you are the God who saves.

Come praise and glorify our God, for we believe the word.

And through our faith we have a seal, the spirit of hope. The spirit of hope. The spirit of hope.

The spirit of hope. Until redemption. Until we join in endless praise to God, the three of us.

[5:10] To the praise of your glory, to the praise of your mercy and grace, to the praise of your glory, you are the God who saves.

Father God, we praise you for your mercy and grace, and that's what we want to live for, for you, for your praise and for your glory, because you are the only one.

You are the only one who's sovereign. You are the only one who's adopted us as your own sons and daughters. And you have united us with Christ, your son, who reigns on the throne.

And we thank you for his presence available to us through your Holy Spirit. Amen. Now we're going to continue to worship. This next song is a classic action song.

It's Our God is a Great Big God. I'm going to get some help. Thank you, Sam. So we'll just recap the, and Bethany, thank you, we'll just recap the actions for the chorus. Our God is a great big God.

[6:22] Our God is a great big God, and he holds us in his hands. So simple, the verses you'll just follow, and enjoy. Let's praise God with our whole bodies and our voices. Let's sing together.

Let's sing together.

Let's sing together.

Let's sing together.

Our God is a great big God, our God is a great big God and he holds us in his hand. He's higher than the skies through earth and is deeper than the sun for rain.

[8:19] He's wider than the universe and beyond our world's dreams. It is great that he's alive since the dawn of dawn began.

How wonderful to be a God of God's amazing man. Our God is a great big God, our God is a great big God, Our God is a great big God and he holds us in his hand.

Our God is a great big God, our God is a great big God. Our God is a great big God and he holds us in his hand.

And He holds us in His hand And He holds us in His hand Let's give a clap for God.

Do please sit down. It's great to praise God with our whole body. So over this last week, we've had a week of prayer. There's some evidence of that.

[9:34] Here in front of me, we've got a prayer tree here. This was one of the prayer stations. So we had a prayer guide that we gave out last week.

If you missed that last week, do please take one. We've got them at the front here. And the aim of the week was to help each other to go deeper in prayer, to pray big. And we gave a bit of a challenge last week to spend a whole hour during the week or an hour than you would normally in prayer.

And we had this prayer tree as part of the prayer space set up here in the chapel, which was open.

And many of you were able to come and make use of that and make use of the different prayer stations and a prayer labyrinth to help us to connect with God and spend that hour in prayer.

So we'd love to hear from anyone at this point who would like to share, what was your experience of the week of prayer, of coming to the chapel if you did that, using the prayer space?

Was there anything that you sensed God was saying as you spent time in prayer with him? So I'd just like people to put their hands up. And now that Sam's warmed up, he's going to run around with the stick mic.

[10:44] And if anyone in the gallery puts your hand up, you'll just have to shout loudly. So who would like to just share something of what they experienced during the week of prayer for our encouragement? Can you go to Ruth over there?

Thanks, Ruth. Okay, so my week of prayer was a bit of a disaster, if I'm honest. So I had a lot going on last week and I didn't do a very good job.

But having said that, I was going out to the car one evening and these two ladies walked up the road and they were like smiling at me. And I was like, smile back. And I thought they were going to compliment my daisies in the front garden.

And then they said, oh, we're from St Andrews and we're doing a prayer walk and we're walking down this road and we're wondering, who on earth can we pray for? And I was like, okay. And I was like, well, I think you've found the right person.

So they prayed for me and I just felt it was really what I needed and they felt that they're called to pray for somebody. Yeah. So yeah, and then I kind of wished them a good prayer walk and yeah, that was it.

[11:47] That's brilliant. What an encouragement that we're just part of many churches in High Wycombe and that other churches were praying last week as they do every week and it's a particular encouragement to you. Thanks for sharing that, Ruth.

Who else would like to just share briefly for our encouragement? Hello. Hi there. I went on the prayer walk and it's the first time I'd ever been on a prayer walk and it was absolutely amazing praying for different places like the one stop and the mental health place and even praying for the car park that's going to be pulled down.

Yeah. And then walking through the lovely tunnel where people had painted and put some lovely pictures and it was great.

Yeah. Brilliant. Thank you so much, Shirley. I'm so glad you could join us for the prayer walk on Thursday. Who else? Anyone made use of the prayer space? Vicky's over there. Thank you. Once you actually dedicate that time to God, how much you can open yourself up to hear what he's saying to you and just spend that time. And I'd like to say the actual prayer stations were amazing. [13:23] Having time to focus on different areas, sort of guiding you what to say to help you go to the next thing and to help you go deeper. So I was really grateful for the chapel this week.

And I also went on the prayer walk. And yeah, it was really amazing to actually be intentional about carving that time out in prayer, especially when life can be so busy.

And it's so easy just to have those quick, hi God type prayers. And actually spending that time really digging deeper was really important to me this week and exactly what I needed.

So thank you. Brilliant. Thank you, Vicky, for sharing that. Anyone else like to share? Over here we've got Mary. I'm with Sheena. And then we go over to Mary over there. Thanks, Sheena. Hi. The whole chapel space was just so peaceful.

And it was really lovely to spend some time in prayer. And the various prayer stations were really, really helpful. I was helping with Job Club Cafe on Wednesday. And I was really struck because a number of the people came through and used the prayer space.

[14:25] And you could see them really enjoying the piece of it and taking part, which I thought was really, really great. Brilliant. Thank you. Okay, Sam, can you take the mic over to Mary over on the other side?

Like everyone else, I've had a lot going on. And so I came down after the baby and toddler session. And I was the only one in here. And to walk in here and hear the music immediately made me feel quite peaceful. And I went around the stations.

But I found the labyrinth unexpectedly amazing. And I was like, oh, my God. Because walking in and you have to kind of go around bends.

And I really felt God was telling me this is how life is. So I'm like, you go and there are bends. And some bends are sharper than others. And then you turn around back where you've come from.

[15:26] And, yeah, I really felt God speaking to me in quite a strange way. And as you turn around and you could see through the glass doors, it's the world out there.

And here we are, you know, praying about that world. And I just felt, yeah, God speaking to me probably more than he ever has. Brilliant. Thank you so much for sharing that.

Anyone else? Anyone up in the gallery? Thank you so much. And I've heard lots of other feedback from people during the week as well. Thank you, Sam. And my thanks to Andy for setting up the prayer space in the chapel.

And thank you to those that helped with that and helped to set it all down yesterday. As I say, the prayer tree is here. And many people have written down prayers for us to pray as a congregation. So what I'd like to ask you to do when you come out, maybe on your way to coffee later, stop by the prayer tree and have a look at some of these and just pray some of the things that have been written on those cards there.

That would be great. Now, we've got part two of something that we shared last week. So last week we had the young people and some of the leaders sharing from the United camp that had just taken place the week before.

[16:36] And Andy mentioned there was going to be a video. The video wasn't quite ready. The video is ready now. So we're going to now watch a video. So this is of the United camp. 16 young people and plus leaders from Union Baptist Church joined with young people from churches all across High Wycombe.

There's about 270 young people there in a field in Latimer. Praising God, this is what it looked like. It's the Maybank holiday and United 2026 is officially underway.

This year, over 300 people have gathered at Latimer, camping, connecting and stepping into four unforgettable days. Oh, everything changed. It's getting harder to recognise.

The person I was. Before I encountered Christ. I don't walk like I used to. I don't talk like I used to. I've been washed from the inside. I've been washed from the inside. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.
[17 : 45] I know it was the blood. Could have only been the blood. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

I know it was the blood. Could have only been the blood. I cannot explain.

But nothing's more real than this. In the presence of God. Or with my heart experience. With my shame at the wayside.

And my sin at the most high. I've been washed from the inside. I've been washed from the inside. What I need.

It's a gift that's for you again. Let me tell you. It's only by the blood. Oh, does anybody want to be holy and righteous?

[18 : 58] Purified as farthest. Let me tell you. It's only by the blood. Does anybody want to be worthy?

Forgiving. Justify really living. Let me tell you. It's only by the blood. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. I know it was the blood. Could have only been the blood. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I know it was the blood. Could have only been the blood. Now all it's left to do is pass.

Oh, because of your blood. All it's left to do is pass. Oh, I know it was the blood. Thank you, Lord.

[20 : 08] Thank you, Lord. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I know it was the blood.

Could have only been the blood. Brilliant. Thank you so much. Particularly to our team of youth leaders who looked after our young people and served on that camp.

Encourage you, after the service, talk to our young people about their experience of that and what they enjoyed. Now, the giving of this congregation has enabled our young people to attend that camp who wouldn't have been able to go otherwise.

And as a result of that, lives have been changed. I want to encourage you with that today. And that's a great kingdom investment. And it's one of the ways that God calls us to participate in his amazing plans and participate in worshipping him, in giving of the resources that he's given us.

We encourage people who worship with us regularly to give regularly as part of their worship. And there's several ways that you can do that. They're shown on our website online. Here in person, we have an offertory box that's on the ramp on the way through to the welcome area.

[21 : 23] And we have a card reader in the welcome area if you'd like to make a gift today. Let's give thanks to God for the gifts that we present to him now. Father God, we thank you for the work that you're doing.

Particularly, we thank you for the work you're doing among children and young people here in this church and in this town. And, yeah, we thank you that's enabled by the giving of your people. And we present to you now the gifts that we're giving to you this week or this month, however that's done, electronically or in person.

And we pray that you'd use these gifts for your glory and for your kingdom purposes. We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Now, in a moment, the children and young people are going to go to their groups.

Perhaps the musicians could just get into their places because they're going to sing as the children and young people go to their groups. We're going to be reading a passage today from Luke chapter 2. And one of the verses in that, Luke 2, 52, says this.

It's about Jesus growing up. It says, Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and with men. And we're going to be thinking more about that later in the service. But we want to pray that particularly for our children and our young people and for WOW who are meeting this afternoon, that they will grow not only physically, but they will grow in wisdom, that they will grow together as part of this church community.

[22 : 37] And they'll grow spiritually to be closer friends with Jesus. So let's pray for them now. Father God, we thank you for our children, for our young people.

And we pray for the WOW group that's going to be meeting this afternoon. We pray for the children, the young people and their leaders now as they go to their groups. We pray that you'll bless them. We pray that you'll help them to connect with you, to understand more of your great love for them and to understand how they can respond to that great love.

And I pray that they'll grow closer to you and closer to each other. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Now we're going to sing as the children and young people go through to their groups.

So I invite you to stand. As we sing, I stand amazed in the presence. And children and young people, please, parents, can you accompany your children through to the welcome area? If you haven't already registered them, register them at the table there and they'll show you where to go. Let's stand and sing together. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[24:34] Amen. Amen.

Amen. How marvelous, how wonderful, and my soul shall ever be.

How marvelous, how wonderful is my Savior's love for me.

He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own.

He bore the burden of powering, and suffered in life alone.

[26:59] How marvelous, how wonderful, and my soul shall ever be.

How marvelous, how wonderful is my Savior's love for me.

How marvelous, how wonderful, and my soul shall be. Then with the ransomed in glory, His face I at last shall see.

It will be my joy through the ages, to sing of His love for me.

How marvelous, how wonderful, and my soul shall ever be.

[28:07] How marvelous, how wonderful is my Savior's love for me.

Amen. Amen. Do please sit down. I just want to give a few announcements about things which are coming up in the next few weeks.

So the first one is that on Tuesday we have a church members meeting. It's going to be on Tuesday the 19th, 7.30. That will be here in the chapel. So you can come in through that door, or the side door.

Church members, please make every effort to come to that, or send in your apologies if you're not able to make it. Among other things, we'll be appointing people to teams and ministries to serve in the year ahead.

We'll be sharing various plans for the months ahead. So that will be an important time to come together. We have a midweek communion service. A week on Tuesday on the 26th of May at 2pm.

[29:09] Open to all that's here in the chapel. Do please join us if you're able to come for that time during the week to meet together to worship God and to meet around the communion table.

And also starting on the 1st of June is the Christianity Explored course. This is a great opportunity if you're new to faith or if you'd like a refresher. It's looking at the life of Jesus, and it's a friendly group, really informal, where you can ask any question that you like that you have about the Christian faith.

We encourage you to sign up for that online. Do please speak to myself or Andy or Mike Birmingham, who's at the back there. He's going to be leading the course, and he'd love to talk to you about that if you're interested in that.

Great. Now I'm going to welcome Brenda, who's going to bring our Bible reading. Thanks, Brenda. Thanks, Brenda.

Our reading today is taken from Luke 2, verses 41 to 52. It's on page 1028 in the Bible.

[30:21] The boy Jesus at the temple. Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When he was 12 years old, they went up to the feast according to the custom.

After the feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But they were unaware of it.

Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.

After three days, they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us like this?

[31:24] Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. Why were you searching for me? he asked. Didn't you know I had to be in my father's house? But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in our heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and people.

Amen. Thank you very much, Brenda. So today we're starting a new sermon series. It's called Journeying with Jesus. And we're going to be working through the early chapters of Luke's Gospel, which tell the life of Jesus. Now we read the narrative of the birth of Jesus. The first part of the Luke's Gospel, chapter one, first part of chapter two, pretty much every year at Christmas. But the next few chapters of the early ministry of Jesus haven't been preached here for quite a while.

[32:28] Now, studying the life of Jesus is one of the most exciting parts of the Bible. I love preaching about the life of Jesus. And I'm really excited to be starting this series. And my hopes are that as we go through Luke's Gospel in the weeks to come, we'll discover new and fresh things about Jesus as we go on this journey.

And that we will grow closer to him and get to know him better. Let's pray as we come to God's word. Father God, we thank you for your word. And we thank you for what it reveals to us about Jesus.

And we pray that you would speak to us now through your word and that your Holy Spirit would help us to understand and to respond to you. We pray that in Jesus name. Amen.

Amen. So we're going to work through that passage that Brenda just read to us. It'd be helpful if you have that open in your Bibles on page 1028.

And we're going to be looking at that together. So this passage, as we heard, is about a big journey, a big road trip. Now, things do sometimes go wrong when you go on long road trips, especially when kids are involved.

[33:37] So many of you know, I used to live in Tanzania and we used to have some big road trips when we lived there because it was a big country. So on one occasion, I was traveling from Oringa, where I live with my family, to Mwanza, which is in north of the country, north of Tanzania.

It's about 1,000 kilometers away. It's about 600 miles away from where we lived. It's a two-day trip that we did, me and two colleagues. And we stopped over halfway and checked into a hotel.

And we needed to refuel our Land Cruiser that we were driving. And this Land Cruiser had a separate key for the filler cap where you put the diesel in. And the separate key we kept in a little cubby hole.

It was designed as a small rubbish bin in the dashboard, like a lot of cars have. And there was a little gap above this little compartment. We opened up the compartment to get the key out.

And the key wasn't there. So we were halfway from home, halfway to our destination. We couldn't get the fuel in because we couldn't find the key to open up the fuel cap. Now, we thought the key has probably disappeared under the little gap behind the back of this little cubby hole.

[34:42] So we went back to the hotel from the petrol station and got the tools out. And we kind of undid the whole of the fascia of this Land Cruiser to get to the back where we thought the key had fallen down.

These things are very, there's a lot of screws and nuts. Did all of that, took it all apart, didn't find the key. So we had to put it all together again. And eventually, I think we had to crowbar open the cap for the filler so we could get the diesel in for the rest of the journey.

When we got back home, my kids were very small. One of my kids, I won't say which one, but he was a toddler at the time. That narrows it down to the other three.

Had a bit of a, he went through, we realised he'd gone through a bit of a magpie phase. And he'd been around collecting small shiny things. And we found at the bottom of his bed, a little container that had the key from the Land Cruiser filler cap.

There's lots of other, well there's lots of other things, including my bank card that I hadn't realised I'd missed. He'd stored them in this little treasure trove. So, road trips and kids, things often go wrong.

[35:43] And this passage describes a big journey that Jesus, the boy Jesus took with his family, in which something went wrong. Now, verse 41 to 42 describes how Jesus' parents would go to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Passover.

Now, the Passover was when the Jewish people celebrated the way that God rescued them from slavery in Egypt hundreds of years before that. And lots of people would flock to Jerusalem at this time. The population of Jerusalem used to grow to eight or nine times its normal size at the Passover.

And in verse 43, we see that they're on their way back from the festival when they realise that they don't have Jesus with them. Now, I don't know if you've ever seen the movie Home Alone.

You should have done because it's shown every single Christmas, multiple times. If you haven't seen it, classic Christmas movie. A chaotic family of young kids, lots of things going on, extended family, and they're actually going away for Christmas.

So they're packing everything up and it's all kind of chaotic. And they get on the plane and the plane takes off. And at some point on the journey, the mum, who's pictured here, realises when she does a head count that they haven't got the youngest kid, Kevin, with them.

[36:57] They've left him behind. And it's a panic. And then there's an adventure as Kevin kind of fights off some burglars and stuff and there's lots of comedy slapstick. I think many of us can probably remember a time either when we couldn't find our parents or couldn't find one of our children or we left one of them behind somewhere.

Most of us have some kind of memory of that sort of thing happening. Now, according to the way that we operate today, it seems remarkable that Jesus' parents could travel a whole day without realising that they didn't have their son with them.

But what we have to understand is that this was a very different world to the one that we live in. And our friends from Africa and Asia and South America will understand this better. In the times where Jesus grew up, there was a very community-oriented approach to looking after children.

You wouldn't always know where your kids are, but they lived in a very close network of extended families with uncles, aunts, cousins, friends, in-laws, any one of whom could be taking care of your kids at any moment.

So they assumed that Jesus was with another family member, which was completely normal. So it wasn't until the day into the journey back, probably at the end of the day when they kind of regrouped, and Jesus' parents realised that something was wrong.

[38:17] He wasn't anywhere in their group. Now, if you've ever been in that situation as a child of losing your parents in a crowded place, you'll know how anxious that feels. You know that tight feeling in your stomach, and it's exactly the same feeling that you get as a parent when you have that moment of thinking, where is my child?

It's a horrible feeling. The interesting thing that we'll see in this passage is that Jesus didn't feel that. He didn't feel that anxious feeling.

Mary and Joseph, concerned for their son, walked all the way back to Jerusalem, and finally they found him. And where did they find him? In the temple, in the courts of the temple, with the teachers there, listening and asking questions about the scriptures.

Now, these people are astounded, as we see in verse 47, because Jesus just doesn't fit into their categories. What 12-year-old boy knows and can ask these kind of questions?

This is not normal for a 12-year-old boy. You don't have young boys like this who can argue and discuss and debate with the top scholars in society. So the people who don't know him and don't believe in him, because they don't know who he is, are astounded.

[39:29] But it's also astounding for the people who do love him and already have some sense of who he is. See verse 48. When his parents saw him, they were astonished.

Now, my guess is that they weren't so much astonished about him answering the questions. They were astonished that he hadn't registered their concerns about him being missing for three days.

His mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us like this?

Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. I think it's fair to say they were angry with him. Now, I think we can relate to this. If we've been through a situation as a parent of our own child wandering off, we lose them and find them again.

And there are several different emotions that we go through. Firstly, relief, utter relief that we found them. But very soon after the relief comes the anger that they put us through that anguish and turmoil by wandering off or whatever they did.

And then forgiveness follows later. But in that moment of anger, what hurt them was not just that Jesus was left behind, but the fact that being left behind didn't seem to bother him.

[40:36] He wasn't making any effort to get back. He was just happily sitting there debating. If he knows enough to debate the top scholars, then he knows enough to know how parents feel when their child is missing.

Mary, Jesus' mother, can't understand him, so she rebukes him. So we see here Jesus confused and astounded and disturbed people who don't know him and love him as well as people who do.

And the same is true today. He will astound people who don't know him and don't love him. And he will astound people who do know him and do love him. People who don't have faith in Jesus, people of other religions or people of no religion, very often say, well, he was a great teacher.

Maybe he was a great prophet, someone we can learn from. But Jesus does not fit into that category. When you look at what Jesus said, when you look at the evidence, as we'll be doing over the next few months as we work our way through this part of Luke's gospel, it becomes clear that he doesn't fit into the category of a teacher or a prophet.

As we'll see in the months ahead, he himself said that he is much more than that. But for people who do love him and know him, they are sometimes left confused by him.

[41:53] Verse 49. He says, why were you searching for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my father's house? Now, when we read this today, we don't grasp how utterly startling it was for Mary and Joseph.

It's not startling for us because we take for granted that we can call God father. Because we live in a post-Christian world. Our world has been so influenced by the Christian message.

We wouldn't even be surprised to hear people who aren't Christians referring to God as father. But at the time, Mary and Joseph didn't assume, as we do, that he's talking about God as his father.

They wouldn't be thinking, of course, God is our father. Because up to that point, people didn't relate to God as father. And when the disciples years later asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, and he said to them, this is how you should pray.

Our father in heaven. We missed that this was a totally groundbreaking thing to say. People didn't call God father when they prayed. It was never used as a personal address in the Old Testament.

[42:59] It was too intimate, too personal. So here, Jesus is doing something that has never been done before. Talking about God as his father. Claiming a personal kind of relationship that nobody had ever claimed before.

And the things that seems insulting to Mary and Joseph is that he's not acknowledging Joseph as his earthly father here. Now, bear in mind that this is a very patriarchal society.

It's an honor-shame culture in which it's very important that elders are respected and fathers are respected. And there's an important detail that I think Luke was very deliberate in including.

We noticed that earlier. How old was Jesus? He was 12 years old. Now, according to Jewish culture, a boy becomes a man at age 13. So that's when he takes on the responsibilities of adulthood.

And they mark it with a bar mitzvah ceremony. So this was a very special time for Jesus. He was on the cusp of coming into adulthood. So when his parents took him to Jerusalem as a 12-year-old, this was a very significant time for being trained and apprenticed for adulthood.

[44:06] And Joseph would have been responsible for that as his father. And it's reasonable to guess that Joseph would have been talking to Jesus about the meaning of the Passover, the meaning of the temple. As they walked the streets of Jerusalem, he'd be saying, this is the temple and this is what the temple is for.

And this is why we go to the temple. And at the Passover, he'd be saying, this is why we eat the lamb and this is what the lamb means. So Joseph, as Jesus' father on earth, was saying, as a man that you're soon going to be, you're going to be a faithful Jew.

You're going to go to the temple. You're going to celebrate the Passover, do all these things. But imagine what Jesus' heavenly father was saying as he walked the streets of Jerusalem.

When he saw the temple, perhaps Jesus' heavenly father said, this is the temple. You are the new temple and you're going to make this place obsolete. And as Jesus walked the streets of Jerusalem, perhaps his heavenly father said, one day you're going to be carrying your own cross through these streets.

And as Jesus sat and ate the Passover meal with his family, perhaps his father in heaven said, you're going to be the Passover lamb. So Jesus, shockingly in that patriarchal culture, rebukes his parents and says, why were you searching for me?

[45:22] And what he's saying to his parents is that my relationship with you as my earthly parents is demoted under my relationship with my father in heaven.

And the implication is, I don't have to obey you. Now we will see just two verses later that he goes home and he does obey them. And we'll come on to that. But Jesus says here, I had to be in my father's house.

He had to be in the home of his heavenly father. Now the Greek phrase translated had to means it was an absolute necessity. And it's exactly the same phrase that Luke uses in chapter four of his gospel, when the disciples are on the road to Emmaus, where Jesus meets his disciples who are who are confused.

They've been looking for him. And he says, he explains the scriptures to them and he says to them, the son of man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.

Jesus is saying, I had to die. It was an absolute necessity. So in verse 50, Jesus' parents didn't understand what he was saying.

[46 : 27] And in the gospels, we'll see this as we go through. Jesus often says cryptic things which confuse people. But in a lot of cases, he then later goes on to explain things. But here he doesn't.

He doesn't give an explanation and his parents are left confused. Now, I think maybe one of the reasons that Luke included this passage from all the material he could have put into the gospel is to prepare us for the rest of the gospel.

Prepare us for journeying with Jesus. He's giving us the heads up that whether you currently believe in Jesus or not, he is going to be somebody who sometimes confuses us and sometimes disturbs us.

And he will often do things that he doesn't explain well. And he'll often do things that we'll have trouble accepting. He confuses even the people who believe in him and love him.

And I think for Mary and Joseph, probably part of their confusion for them was, if you love us, how could you do this to us? How could you treat us like this? How could you dishonor us like this?

[47 : 30] And for any of us who love Jesus and follow Jesus, there will be times when we don't understand what he's saying and where we're confused by what he's doing. And I know that some of you are going through stuff right now where you're thinking, why are you doing this, Jesus?

Or why are you letting this happen? If you love me, why would you allow this to happen? And we might be tempted to think, if he's that confusing, why should we follow him?

But Luke shows us a reason to follow him in the next verse. Verse 51. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. Jesus, as the only begotten son of God, does not have to obey his parents.

As we've said, his relationship with them, any honor due to them is demoted under the relationship with his father, God. If he obeys them, it's voluntary.

He does obey them. He doesn't have to. In a society where you respect your father, you respect your elders, Jesus can say to his parents, I'm older than you.

[48 : 39] The first and only child who could ever say that to their parents. He was around before the dawn of creation. So it's voluntarily that he obeys his parents when he goes down to Nazareth.

But this shows that he is totally committed to loving and serving those he sometimes confuses. And he is totally committed to loving and serving you and me.

There's another really interesting detail that Luke included in verse 46. Did you notice how long he was gone for? Three days. And this is significant because there came another time when he was gone for three days when he died.

Because he is committed to the death to those, to love those like you and me that he sometimes confuses. As for Mary, we're told that she treasured all these things in her heart in verse 51.

And we too should, should trust and treasure him in our hearts. And he will grow on us and we will grow closer to him as we do that. And just to finish with, between the age of 12 and 30, all we know about Jesus from all the gospels is the next verse, verse 52.

[49 : 52] I mentioned it earlier. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man. And this is so profound, this one verse. I wish I could preach a whole sermon on this verse.

Because Jesus sets the model here for how we should grow and develop as we follow him. And it's the pattern for a healthy life that Jesus has set out for us. So I think it's important that we pay a bit of attention to us, to this today.

There's four parts to this. We're going to look at each part briefly in turn. So Jesus talks about growing in wisdom. Wisdom is about making decisions. We have a lot of decisions to make in life every day.

What we have for breakfast. What colour socks to wear. But some decisions are harder or bigger. We need wisdom to make difficult decisions like, who should I be friends with? What do I do when I

see somebody acting unkindly?

And we have decisions about how we prioritise our time and how we use our money and so on. We need a lot of wisdom to make these decisions. Wisdom is different from knowledge. It has more to do with listening, asking the right questions, and what we do with the answers to those questions.

[50:58] The Bible tells us in James 1 verse 5 that God will give us wisdom when we ask for it. The next way that Jesus grew was in stature. This literally means growing bigger. He grew stronger.

He grew taller. He grew physically. Most of us in this room are no longer growing taller. Although interestingly, our noses and our ears continue to grow as we go through life. Did you know that? But physical wellbeing is important for our growth towards Jesus. It's really important for all of us to do what we can to look after our bodies. To get exercise as much as we can.

To eat well. To sleep well. Our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit, as we saw in 1 Corinthians 6 a few months back. The next way that Jesus grew was in favour with God.

What does it mean for us to grow in favour with God? Well, it means that we grow spiritually. We grow in a way which pleases God. All of us live to please someone, whether we realise it or not.

[51:57] We might live to please our friends. We might live to please our family. We might live to please ourselves. But actually, the best thing that we can do for our friends or our family and ourselves is to live to please God.

Because God knows what's best for us. And following his ways will be best for us and for other people. God loves us. And the thing that pleases him most is to spend time with us.

We can come to him like a young child who lays on their dad's lap and tells him everything about what's going on. What we're feeling, what we're worried about, what we're happy about. And he loves to hear from us.

And he loves to speak to us. He speaks to us through the Bible and through other people. And he will speak to us in other ways if we learn to spend time with him. And it's been great to hear how people have experienced that in this last week through our week of prayer.

Where people have found it a wonderful experience, as we've heard from some people already. To spend a whole hour in quiet with God. To pour out our hearts to him. And to hear what he has to say to us.

[52:56] The final way in which we're told that Jesus grew is in favour with man. This means to grow closer to other people. To grow in community with others. God created us to live in community.

And there's many things that we can't achieve and can't enjoy without sharing with other people. Working together with other people and building relationships with other people. We can't grow closer to Jesus in isolation.

We need the community of the church around us. That's why we emphasise the importance of life groups here at Union Baptist Church. And other groups like Christianity Explored. Where we can meet and grow together with others.

So this is how Jesus grew. It's about growing in all areas of life. Psychologically, physically, spiritually and socially. And it's important for us to grow in all these areas.

As we grow older, we don't continue to grow physically. No matter what age we are, we should be looking after our bodies. We should be growing in wisdom. We should be growing in our relationship with Jesus. And we should be growing in our relationship with others.

[53:58] Especially within the church community. God created us as whole people with bodies and minds. He created us to have relationships with other people. And he created us to have a relationship with him. And that's only possible because of Jesus.

Who lived the life that we should have lived. And then died the death that we should have died. So that we don't have to. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we acknowledge that sometimes we find what you say and do confusing.

But help us to trust you. Knowing that you are totally committed to us. Knowing that you love us. Knowing that you died for us.

Help us to grow closer to you. Help us to grow as you grew. So that we can be healthy physically. So that we can be wise in the decisions we make. So that we can grow as part of this community of believers.

And that we can grow closer to you. And walk in your ways. Amen. Amen. Going to invite the musicians to come. Now and they're going to lead us. As we spend some time reflecting on God's

word.

[55:03] And preparing to come to the communion table. We're going to sing. I love you Lord. I invite you to stand as we sing together. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. I love you Lord. I love you Lord. Oh your mercy never fails me. I love you Lord.

I love you Lord. Oh your mercy never fails me. All my days I've been held in your hands From the moment that I wake up Until I lay my head I will sing Of the goodness of God All my life I've been faithful All my life I've been so, so good In every breath that I have I will sing

Of the goodness of God I love your voice You have led me to the fire In the darkest night You are lost like no other I've known you as a father I've known you as a friend I have led you in the goodness of God And all my life you have been faithful And all my life you have been so, so good With every breath that I am made

[57:41] I will sing Of the goodness of God Your goodness is running after It's running after It's running after me Your goodness is running after It's running after me With my life laid down I surrender now I give you everything Your goodness is running after Running after Running after me Your goodness is running after

With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now. I give you everything. Your goodness is running after, it's running after me.

It's all my life you have been faithful. And all I feel I've been so, so good.

And every breath that I have made, I will sing the goodness of God.

I don't want to be so, so good.

[59:50] And every breath that I have made, I will sing the goodness of God.

Amen. I will sing the goodness of God. Amen. Do please take a seat.

If I can ask those who are helping to serve communion, so come and join me here. Thank you.

At this table, we remember the meal that Jesus shared with his disciples, as Luke recorded later in his gospel in Luke 22. He said this, when the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table.

And he said to them, I've eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. This was the Passover meal that Jesus had celebrated every year with his family, as all these Israelites did.

[61:16] And I wonder if he thought back to that time when he was 12, when he celebrated the Passover with his parents, but then got separated from them. As he stayed in the temple courts and they started back to Nazareth.

Well, this Passover was very different because this one was the last Passover meal that Jesus would eat on earth. And he said, for I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, take this and divide it among you. For I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

And he took bread and gave thanks and broke it and gave it to them saying, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Jesus was showing his disciples and each one of us that he is the Passover lamb. That he came to make the one sacrifice for us, that he came to die in our place.

[62:31] He was saying, I've lived the life you should have lived. And now I'm going to die the death that you should have died. The disciples didn't know it at that point. They were confused by what he was saying.

But Jesus knew what was ahead of him. He knew the cross was ahead of him. And he knew that at the cross, he would break the bonds of sin and fear, anxiety and regret and guilt.

All the things that bind us. And I have in front of me here the cross that was set up at one of the prayer stations here in the chapel during the week.

And at this prayer station, people were encouraged to think about something which holds them back. And something which seems to bind them and seems to have control on their lives. That it's not from God.

And to tie a cable tie. And then to snap that cable tie, to break it through with scissors. And to lay it down at the cross.

[63:33] And to write down what Jesus has set us free from when he died on the cross. So at this table, we can be thankful to Jesus that he sets us free from feelings of being inadequate at everything.

From anxiety. From being unkind to myself. From unhelpful friendships.
From hatred and anger. From the distractions of the world. From being burdened by my body.
He sets us free from unforgiveness. And from emotional heartache.
And anything else that threatens to hold us back. He sets us free from that. Let's take a moment to examine ourselves.

[64:48] To pray for God's forgiveness. For the times when we've let him down. Before we come to share in this meal. Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for the perfect life we see lived out in your son Jesus.

Lord, we're sorry for the times we haven't trusted your son and his ways. We're sorry for the times we've not looked after our bodies. For the times we've not sought your wisdom. For the times when we've selfishly held back from being part of the community you call us to.

For the times we've not sought your favor. We thank you that in your death and resurrection. You break us free from the power of sin. And from anything which holds us back.

We thank you for the freedom. And the forgiveness you offer us in Jesus. Amen. What we'll do in just a moment is we'll pass around plates of bread.

And we can each take a piece of bread and eat it as we receive it. Reminding ourselves that Jesus died for each one of us individually. He wants a personal relationship with each one of us.

[65:56] The small dish on each plate is gluten free bread. So please use that one if you prefer that or need that one. Afterwards we'll pass around the trays which have small cups of non-alcoholic wine.

When you receive the cup of wine please hold on to it. We'll wait until everyone has been served as we normally do. And then we'll all drink together. Reminding ourselves that Jesus has saved us. Not just as individuals but also into a community.

His family. The church. Sharing in holy community is something that we take part in as individuals. Who've made that decision to follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

And if that's not where you're at yet. If that's not something you're not sure about or not ready for yet. Please feel free just to let the trays pass you by today. But we pray that God will speak to you as you observe what's going on here.

Let's thank Jesus for what we celebrate here. Thank you Jesus. That knowing what was before you. You went ahead with the Father's plan. And you went to the cross for us.

[66:57] Thank you that you died so that we could be free. From all the things that we've mentioned here. Thank you that you rose again. So that we can be assured of victory over sin, death.

And everything that threatens us. Amen. So remember Jesus. Took the bread. And as he broke he said this is my body.

Which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Thanks God.

I'll take my now. For the accruits. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[69:41] Amen. Amen.

Amen. So we remember that Jesus took the cup and he said, this cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood.

Whenever you drink it, do this in memory of me. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[73:41] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Let's drink together, remembering what Christ has done for us. Let's pray.

Lord, thank you that you came to give your life as a ransom for each one of us. Thank you that you paid that price.

You drank that cup of suffering in order to rescue us. Thank you that you saved us, not just as individuals, but as a people, a worldwide family, your worldwide family. And it's your death and resurrection that unites us.

We thank you for all this in your holy name. Amen. Amen. Now I'd like to welcome Chris, who's going to come and lead us in our prayers of intercession. Thanks, Chris.

[75:10] Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we pray that out of your glorious riches that you might strengthen us with power through your spirit and your inner being so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through your faith. And we pray that you being rooted and established in love will give us the power together with all of the Lord's holy people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that we will be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Lord Jesus, thank you that we can pray before you, our Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. We give thanks for this past week of prayer.

Thank you that we've been able to praise you and say sorry and give thanks and listen to you and seek what you want us to do.

[76:35] Please help us to be a church that is devoted to prayer in the weeks and months and years to come. We pray for Philip and Rosemary Halliday, who serve with BMS World Mission in France, who are supported by this church.

They are returning to Massey Baptist Church, where Philip will be serving as an interim pastor. We pray that out of your glorious riches that you will strengthen Philip and Rosemary with power through your Holy Spirit.

We ask your spirit to guide them as they seek to resolve some of the financial difficulties that are linked to the closure of the language school there for mission workers.

We pray for Christians in Sudan, a country that is currently devastated by civil war. Nearly 20 million people are facing severe hunger and the UN is warning of famine there.

We pray that Christ will dwell in the hearts of Sudanese Christians through faith, showing a different way of peace and love and hope. We pray that churches there and aid agencies will work together to feed the hungry.

[77:53] and we pray for a ceasefire and an end to violence in the country. Father God, we pray for our town and for our church's community ministries.

We give thanks for WOW and for all the volunteers who help adults with learning disabilities gather to worship and meet with you, Lord. We pray that the guests, carers and volunteers will be rooted and established in love.

And we pray that together with all the Lord's holy people that they will grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is for them. We also pray for the Job Club Cafe, which is running again this week.

We give thanks for all of the people who have not only found employment through this ministry, but who have also taken steps to explore what it might mean to have faith in Christ and to follow you. We pray that the guests who come along this week will find meaningful work and grasp just how wide and long and high and deep your love is for them.

[79:11] We pray for everyone who is a part of this church congregation and especially for those who have just started coming along. We give thanks for Andy and Carol Banks who are hosting a newcomer's lunch today.

We pray that everyone who goes will feel welcomed and know of your great love for them, which surpasses all knowledge. We pray for everyone at this church who has recently lost a loved one. We pray especially for Susan Facolujo and her children, Simon and Naomi, as they celebrate the life of their father, Anthony. And they're going to be remembering this at a funeral service this Friday.

We give thanks that Anthony knew you as his Lord and Saviour. And we thank you so much that he is going to be with you.

He is in your arms, Lord. And we pray for the family as they mourn the loss of a much-loved father and husband. And we pray, even at this time of sadness, that they will know your love for them, which surpasses all knowledge.

[80:23] And we pray that the family will be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever.

Amen. Thank you so much, Chris. I'm going to ask the music group to come and take their places so they can lead us in our final song as we continue to reflect on God's goodness and praise him for that.

We're going to sing together You Were the Word at the Beginning. What a beautiful name. Please stand if you're able. Amen. You were the Word at the Beginning You were the Word at the Beginning One with God, the Lord most high You were the Word at the Beginning The Name of Jesus Christ, my King

What a beautiful name it is What a beautiful name it is The name of Jesus Christ, my King What a beautiful name it is Nothing confesses What a beautiful name it is What a beautiful name it is The name of Jesus He didn't want heaven without us Jesus, you brought heaven down Now, my sin was greater, love was greater.

What could separate us now? What a wonderful name it is. What a wonderful name it is.

[83:15] The name of Jesus Christ, my King. What a wonderful name it is.

Nothing compares to this. What a wonderful name it is. The name of Jesus.

What a wonderful name it is. The name of Jesus. Death could not hold you.

The battle before you. You silence the bones of sin and grace. The heavens are roaring.

The praise of your glory. For you are raised to life again. You have no rival.

[84:35] You have no equal. Now I've forever gone to reign.

Yours is the kingdom. Yours is the glory. Yours is the name above all names.

What a powerful name it is. What a powerful name it is. The name of Jesus Christ, my King.

What a powerful name it is. Nothing can stand against. What a powerful name it is.

The name of Jesus. You have no rival. You have no equal.

[85:38] Now and forever. Now and forever. God you reign. Yours is the kingdom.

Yours is the glory. Yours is the name above all names.

What a powerful name it is. What a powerful name it is. The name of Jesus Christ, my King.

What a powerful name it is. Nothing can stand against. What a powerful name it is.

The name of Jesus. What a powerful name it is. The name of Jesus.

[86:37] What a powerful name it is. The name of Jesus. Amen.

As we remain standing, a final prayer. This was in the prayer guide as a prayer for our town from Psalm 67. I'm going to pray this as a prayer of blessing over all of us.

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, God.

May all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy. For you rule the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, God.

May all the peoples praise you. Amen. Amen. Do please sit down. Thank you so much for joining us for this time together. At this point, we've got some informal time to meet, to get to know each other over coffee.

[87:43] There'll be tea and coffee served through in the welcome area and through in the foyer out the back that way. Do please stick around. If you've got children, please pick up your children first and then come back for tea and coffee.

We'd love to give an opportunity to pray for you. And if you head to the after service prayer area by the first pillar over that side today, Kathy and Colin will be there.

They'd love to pray with you. Anyone with a praying hands badge would also love to pray with you. Or anyone with a lanyard. Do please stick around. If you are sat currently in that area, please stick around there.

And so we can pray for you. Otherwise, if you could make some space there for other people who want to come and receive prayer, that'd be great. God bless you and enjoy your tea and coffee.

Thanks.