

# Jesus and Baptism

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[ 0 : 00 ] Okay, for a few minutes this morning, I want to look back at the reading that Robin took from Mark chapter 10, rather than Mark chapter 5.

I don't know why I had that open at Mark 5. And really, one of the themes we're looking at, we're looking at the theme we're going to look at, we have been looking at Psalms in the morning worship. I'm taking a break from that today for a particular reason, because we've got eight baptisms to look forward to in the next few weeks.

So I thought we would set the scene for that today with what we're going to look at and remind ourselves of the importance of what we do and the importance of children as well.

And why it's so significant for us, the sacrament of baptism. We recognize that children matter to Jesus. And I'm going to come back to that just towards the end.

And I know that in the passage there was two kind of sections. There was one, if you've got a Bible with you, you'll see that. But if not, it's fine as well. I can just tell you that the first section was entitled, Let the Little Children Come to Me.

[ 1 : 05 ] And it's that passage just with the children coming to Jesus, the disciples, pushing them away. And Jesus said, No, let them come. And then the other one was his interaction with this rich young ruler.

And we see in that section, certainly the first section, that children matter to Jesus. Now, I know it's not a passage about baptism of babies, and I'll maybe say a little bit more about that later, because I do appreciate and I realize that within the Christian church, there are a variety of different positions about who should be baptized and when they should be baptized.

And I'm not going to speak about that really today. I'm not going to unpack the theology of why we believe it's important that not only believers are baptized, but also the children of believers should be baptized.

So what I want to do today is just focus on Jesus and on what Jesus is saying here and why I think it's important for us to consider. Because when we come to the Bible, we always find that Jesus is provoking us to think, and God is provoking us to think about him, about who he is, and about why he matters in our lives.

And that's really a reflection of why we come to church in the first place, because it's recognizing that we worship God and we have given our lives as Christians to Jesus.

[ 2 : 19 ] And that matters. And we corporately come together and we worship and we acknowledge that and we live our... We seek to go and live our lives recognizing Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

So the first thing I just want to say briefly is that I think when we recognize God's word and the passage we read particularly, we're reminded that this world is not all that is.

I think we're pushed towards recognizing that. Jesus... There's a couple of verses in verse 16 and verse 17.

He speaks about... or verse 17 to 30. Well, the whole passage really speaks about the reality of the kingdom of God. Verse 15, he says, truly I say to you, speaking about the children, whoever doesn't receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter that.

And then in verse 23, he also says... or he's looking around after dealing with the guy, the rich young ruler. He says, how difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

[ 3 : 28 ] So we've got these two references in this passage to the kingdom of God. And it's a reminder that Jesus is always pushing us to think about a spiritual dimension to life and worship that we do as part of that.

Josie's baptism is part of that. It's a recognition on her parents' part that they recognize this spiritual dimension.

And for all of us who are Christians, it's not just make-believe. It's not wishful thinking. It's not just a sideline or a moral philosophy that we add to kind of attach to our lives, but rather it is the core of our humanity.

Just recognizing the spiritual dimension is absolutely critical to us, that the living God is the God to whom we're all accountable, that we are made in His image. We're image-bearers of Him.

In many ways we are children of the living God. It's interesting. Jesus then later on in this passage we read speaks to the disciples and He calls them children. And there's that recognition that the story really, that if you take the whole storyline of the Bible, it's really about the humanity rejecting His love and His lordship and His parental oversight, as it were, over us, that has led to a broken people spiritually in a broken world that I was praying about.

[ 4 : 48 ] So in a sense we're estranged children from the living God, and we can't enter or re-enter, as it were, the kingdom of God or the family of God without God's own help, because we can't deal with His holiness and His perfection and His justice and His purity, because we're sinners and we fail Him at every level.

And so there's a barrier between us. So you know what that's like, don't you? In a family context, either between parents or between children, siblings and parents or whoever it might be, in a family or in a work context, really, or any context, if there's a barrier, that that barrier needs to be addressed moving forward.

And that's the reality spiritually of us as well, that we have a barrier between ourselves and God, and there's consequences for that in our lives, physical death that speaks of spiritual death and separation eternally from Him.

And that is drastic. It's awful. It's realistic spiritually, but it's there to drive us towards the antidote, towards the solution, towards the healing, towards the open arms of a Savior Jesus Christ, and that's the gospel.

And there's two really interesting interactions here. The first is with the rich man, who was the business? He really was the business, the rich man.

[ 6 : 24 ] He was young, he was confident. He went to see Jesus, he liked Jesus, he wanted, in reality, seems to have wanted Jesus to back up who he was and his morality and his goodness.

And he simply seemed to assume that he was good enough for God. He was a good guy, and he was a good guy. We would all enjoy knowing him. He seemed to be a nice guy.

Interesting. He was a religious guy. He was someone who thought by going to church and by outwardly trying to keep the laws of God that would be absolutely perfect with God.

God would be more than happy with that. So by his own standards, and by the standards possibly of those around him, he was as good or better than people around him. He thought he kept God's law, and he liked Jesus.

He thought Jesus was a significant moral teacher, and he gave him respect and his due. And he really, I think, expected Jesus just to rubber-stab you.

[ 7 : 23 ] Good guy. Brilliant. You're doing tremendously well. You're doing your best, you're being moral, and that he could go away feeling great, enjoying his riches, enjoying his youth, and enjoying all the pleasures that money bought him, as well as keeping going to church.

You know, he's a kind of guy that was a church goer in many ways. But the really interesting thing is, I think, that Jesus could see into his heart.

It's a beautiful verse where it says, Jesus looked at him, loved him, and said, You just like one thing. Go sell everything you have.

Give to the poor. Then you'll have treasured in heaven. Come and follow me. Now, there's lots within that, and we don't have time to unpack. But Jesus could see right into his heart and could see that actually his wealth mattered more to him than anything else.

It really mattered more to him than being right with God and finding spiritual treasure. His treasure was somewhere else, and Jesus exposed that very powerfully, lovingly, and in many ways, gently, money, and what it offered to him was actually his God.

[ 8 : 44 ] He didn't see any need really to be fixed. He didn't feel that he was broken, or if he was broken internally, he felt that he could just put himself right with God. He was in charge.

He was as good and better than other people. But there was this disordered love in his heart. It wasn't the fact that he loves great, but it was the focus.

It was what he loved that displaced his love for God, and presumably in many ways other people as well.

Because that, and we often think of, and I think this guy thought about sin in terms of the do-nots of the commandments, the second table of the law, don't do this, don't do that.

It's hugely significant, but they all point to something within our hearts, and that sin ultimately is about disordered love.

[ 9 : 45 ] It's about putting something in our hearts, either maybe ourselves or other things, before our love for God, our maker, and Christ, our redeemer.

See, Jesus isn't saying anything really about money. He's not saying it's good to be poor or it's good to be rich. He's not saying it's bad to be rich and it's good to be poor. He's not making a point about our wealth and poverty at that level per se.

He's just saying for this man, wealth was what kept him. It was what he lived for. It was what he worshiped. It was what was significant in his life more than anything else.

And really Jesus is talking into his heart. And that is what Jesus does for all of us, and for each of us, it's different things, isn't it, that we can sometimes put before Him, disordered loves.

It's not always the things that come across as wrong in society or clear and plainly bad or sinful, but it can often be loving things the wrong way without the giver of love, without the gift of the giver of love enabling us to love things in the right perspective and idolizing things before Him.

[ 11 : 04 ] Because we often think of the Ten Commandments, and we think of them as very harsh and negative. It's all about God, and then it's all about, don't do this, don't do that, don't do the next thing.

But you know, Jesus beautifully summarizes the law of God, the Ten Commandments, just with two. Love me with all your heart, soul, strength in mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.

That's really the, that's the outworking of them. And love does have these structures, and that's what we fall short of.

And Jesus was wanting to expose that to this rich man who thought he didn't need Jesus, wanted Jesus to rubber stamp him, as it were, and go away happy.

And Jesus always, doesn't, we've looked at that over the last few weeks, Jesus always turns our lives upside down. He always changes our thinking. He always turns our heart inside out because He wants to see our heart, and He wants to see where He is in our heart because He wants to restore that relationship and save us from death and from our own sins.

[ 12 : 13 ] So there's two responses, isn't there, to that in our lives? We see it here. We either go away sad from hearing about Jesus like the rich man did, or we can follow Jesus, which is what the Jesus was asking the rich man to do, come follow me.

It's so easy to go away sad from Him. And as Christians, we can do that very often in our lives when we look at God's Word and we hear God speaking to us in our hearts through His Word and He asks us to do something.

Sometimes we just turn away from Him. But when we do so, we go away sad. And the gospel is about the offer of His love and of His grace and of His goodness.

But we can look at that and say, nah, nah, the cost is too great. That's exactly what the rich man did, didn't he, in verse 24?

He just, he couldn't keep that going. The cost was too great. Jesus said how difficult it would be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. Again, it's not the crying wealth.

[ 13 : 22 ] There's a lot of wealthy people in the Bible, how they lived their lives. But it's difficult because we can become self-reliant because of it and not think we need God in any way because there is a cost to following Jesus.

But He goes away, isn't it sad? He goes away spiritually alone. And He goes away with unresolved need deep in His heart.

Or we can listen to Jesus and follow Him in our lives. And that's an ongoing life for us, isn't it? We can follow Him, be transformed.

He can work in our hearts to the disordered loves. And He can deal with the kind of selfishness and the pride and the difficulties that we have. And we can do that because He took our sinful estrangement from the Father on the cross in our place.

And that's why we sing about the cross so much. It's a strange thing, I think. I've said that before, strange thing to sing about, isn't it? The cross of Jesus, a Jewish man 2,000 years ago and nailed

to a tree. Strange.

[14:23] But we do that because we recognize Him as God in the flesh who gave up everything to die in our place to take the price that we couldn't pay. In His perfection, He took our sin upon Him and He died in our place.

And that's what the baptism points to. That's what the water and the cleansing points to. And that's what it's all about. And we can't ignore that or forget that. It's not a naming ceremony. It's something much more significant biblically than that as we recognize it.

So there's these two responses. And we are all invited to consider and to be challenged by that today. So that's the first person. Very briefly, I want to just mention the second group that Jesus speaks to here.

And that's turning things on their head. I don't turn things on their head. I mean, doing things back to front, which I sometimes do because they'd actually mentioned first here. So I'm sorry about that.

Is the pesky little children? So Jesus has spoken to a rich young man, but He's also now looking at the pesky little children. Because in Jesus' society, and maybe today as well, to a greater or lesser degree, children don't have a great deal of status in society.

[15:31] They have nothing. Certainly in Jesus' day, they were regarded as having nothing significant to offer. Their opinions weren't sought. They had nothing to teach other. They were just a nuisance to polite society.

They weren't listened to, apart from, of course, by their parents who loved them. But they had no legal or social standing, really. They couldn't make demands of any kind. They were totally reliant on the protection and love and the provision of their parents to keep them.

And so when the little kids come to Jesus here, the disciples will nag him, go on, get away you go. Jesus is far too important and busy to deal with you. And He rebukes them, and He loves the children, and He blesses them, and indeed goes on to use them as an illustration of coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

Verse 5, True I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of heaven like a little child shall not enter it. And what's Jesus saying? Well, He's reminding us that to become a Christian, rather, to be His children, as He talks to the disciples, we need to recognize that we are valuable to Him as our heavenly Father, but we're also totally reliant on Him and on His grace and on the grace of God in Jesus Christ, that we can't save ourselves, that we don't have a voice at that level, we don't have anything we can claim before God to give us entry into His fellowship and His friendship, but He has come, and the greater love is no man in this, that He died for His friends.

And we come claiming Jesus, and to become Christians, we need to be humble and recognize that. And Jesus finishes this passage by saying, those who are first will be last and the last first, and that's really all that He's pointing towards, that we come with nothing, nothing in our hands we bring, simply to His cross we cling.

[17:22] So we learn from children that way, and especially as Jesus was highlighting their place in the society in which He lived, and He said, as Christians, if you're going to become a Christian, enter the kingdom of God, that's going to be similar for you, dependent entirely on your heavenly Father through Christ.

But it also speaks that children matter to God, doesn't it? He blesses them in verse 16. He had time for them. He cared for them. And He chooses, not exclusively, but foundationally, He chooses to build His kingdom and to grow the Christian faith through families.

He knows that when an individual comes to faith, that they will influence those closest to them, and especially their family. And family will see them, because you know what it's like with family, don't you?

They see you exactly as you are. And if they see a change, then that influences them. And if Jesus has changed you, then it will have an influence on them. And parents, especially, have such a responsibility to know and teach and love and pray and make Jesus real in the family to them. And Roger and Laura all of that privilege and that blessing with Josie. So God grants children of believers great privileges in being brought up within that context.

[18:46] And I think baptism for us in our context speaks of both of these things. It's a visible sign of Christ, of what Christ has done.

The washing of water is a visible sign that it speaks of, and it's a sacrament of what the new life, the new cleansing, the washing of waves in, and the new relationship with Jesus Christ in the life of a

new believer.

Others are then asked to be baptized, to accept Jesus by faith and trust as their Savior. And they have trusted in His promise to redeem them by faith.

And they believe in that, and they come and we come and follow Jesus whose shed blood was poured out on the cross so that we can be made new, have new life, and be baptized.

And it also speaks, we believe, of the same faith that is in the parents, that is the faith that allows their child to come under the baptismal covenant.

[ 19 : 57 ] It's faith that they have, that they believe that the sign of the promise that they received is not just for them, but also for their children, as it was in the Old Testament, revelation of that sign in circumcision.

Have we got the verses up? Did I? You have, okay. In Genesis 17, verse 9, we've got the verse, when Abram was nine, and I used to the Lord, appear to Abram and said to him, I am God Almighty.

Look before me and be blameless that I make a covenant between me and you and may multiply you greatly then. Abram fell in his face, God said to him, behold, my covenant is with you and you shall be the father of many nations. No longer shall they be Abram, but you shall be called Abram, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

And I will make you exceedingly fruitful and I will make you into many nations. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout the generations, everlasting covenant to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

And then the next one, if you have that, and God said to him, for I, well, okay, forget, it's fine. But there's also a New Testament covenant, or when Peter speaks at the great Pentecost sermon, he speaks absolutely with the same terminology and the same language that people, the gospel is to go out to all the nations and children of believers and believers were to be baptized and to nations far away.

[ 21 : 41 ] And we recognize that the privilege, the covenantal privileges, they have huge responsibilities and opportunities, and the parents are vowing to point their children to Jesus and to His life, to His love, to the washing of sins and to salvation.

We recognize it doesn't save, but we know it points to Jesus. So Roger and Laura, the baptism of we, Josie, today is on the basis of your faith in what Christ has done for you and what you believe He will do for Josie under the covenant of promise.

And as you point her to Jesus by the way you live, by the way you interact, by the way you worship, and all that involves not only just for yourselves individually, but as part of the church that we all belong to here, because she's baptized into the church family, not just the what family.

And so Josie, as she grows up, she will learn all about Jesus. She'll come to know the privileges she has, and she'll need to move from knowing Jesus in her home to knowing Jesus in her heart. And she'll need to come to that personal knowledge and faith in Jesus Christ as her own, to make good the baptismal promises of God for her, symbolized in the washing of blood.

[ 23 : 15 ] And her parents will be showing her Jesus all the way through. And that's a challenge maybe for some today who are baptized grown-ups, who were baptized as children.

And whether they have come to recognize the privilege of the upbringing they had in pointing them to Jesus, and whether they've taken Jesus, whether you have taken Jesus to be your Lord and Savior, and to put your trust in Him.

So that is what we do today, and it's not a one-off, it's just a token of what happens for the rest of her life, and as long as she is with us and whatever she is.

And if you keep smiling like that, Josie, you will win a million hearts, and especially mine today. So we're going to pray, and then we're going to sing, and I'm going to invite everyone, the kids back up, and then we'll baptize Josie.

So Father God, we thank You for this day. We thank You for the privilege and hope of this day. We thank You for the grace and the goodness that this day brings.

[ 24 : 27 ] And we pray Your blessing on us as we move into the baptism of Josie. We pray that it would be, it's a physical sign, it's something we can look at and see, but it speaks of spiritual truth as well.

And we ask that it would be something that we would be challenged by, excited by, encouraged by, and we remind ourselves as a church family of the importance of children to us, the beauty of

having the life of children with us, the privilege of the covenant that we believe in being a covenant of grace that reaches out with its sign, not only to us as believers, but to our children. And may that be what we live and what we speak of and what we enjoy and know. So continue with us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.