

Today You Will Be With Me In Paradise

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[0 : 0 0] As I mentioned with the reading, we are working through Luke 23 in our morning services at the moment. And in that chapter, Jesus says five things. And we're looking at each of these one by one.

And we've come to the fourth one today. So let me read again verse 39. One of the criminals who were hanged, railed at Jesus saying, Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.

But the other rebuked him saying, Do you not fear God since you're under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we're receiving the due reward for our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong.

And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And he said to him, truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. And it's those words that we're going to be focusing on.

The Bible frequently describes the message of Christianity as good news. And whether or not you agree with that, it's something that we can definitely relate to.

[1 : 0 2] I'm sure every one of us can think of times in our lives when we heard good news. And it filled us with joy. I can think of a great example of that.

I can think of hearing the news that we, Callum, was born. And I remember not long after he was born, I was in the hospital seeing somebody else. And I thought, I wonder if I could nip in and see Callum. And I did.

And there he was. That was good news. I found out after that that apart from his family, I was his first visitor. And I'm very chuffed about that, which is very, very good. There's tons of examples like that.

Good news that fills us with joy. And I think we can maybe even say that maybe the most powerful moments of good news in our lives come in relation to situations when people are maybe in danger.

Maybe there's a risk to ourselves or to others. So sometimes you see things in the news. I remember a few years ago, there was all these people trapped in a mine in Chile. And the whole world was watching to see whether they would get out and they were rescued.

[2 : 0 4] And it's the same whether somebody's missing on a boat, somebody's lost on a hill. When they're found, it brings a huge sense of joy, even if we don't know these people at all.

And then when it's people that we do know, if it's people we know and love who've got a health scare or if they're in other kind of difficulties, when things turn out well, when a diagnosis is not as bad as we feared, or when treatment has actually worked, then it's such good news.

And I'm sure every one of us here can relate to that. And even for ourselves as we go through life, whether when we're confronted with the fragility of our own physical health or the frailty of our minds, with the potential for something bad to happen in our lives or the bruises that come when difficult things do arise, in all those moments, we long for good news.

And we want that good news to tell us one thing. We want that good news to tell us that everything is going to be okay. And that's true for all of us.

It's especially true as parents. Every parent in here, if there's been ever anything wrong with your children or any risk towards them, you just want to know that they're okay.

[3 : 31] And so in the worst moments of life, when your child is unwell, when people are missing, when there's a terrifying emergency, when the diagnosis is everything that you are dreading, in all of those moments, the news that we desperately want to hear is that everything is going to be okay.

It's going to be okay. That's the good news that we all long for. And what I want us to see today is that that is exactly what the gospel is about.

And it's everything that we long for. The promise that it's going to be okay is exactly what Jesus has come to give you.

And we're going to see that, I hope, as we look at these words. And we're going to have just four headings. And the four headings just come from splitting this statement into four chunks. So we're going to be thinking about today, you will be with me in paradise.

So first of all, today, let's think a little bit about that word. And that's a crucial and fascinating word, both for the thief and for our theology.

[4 : 47] For the thief, this day was the worst day of his life. Whatever he's done, he has messed up badly. He's made terrible choices.

He's been caught. And now everybody wants him dead. And finally, that moment has come. Once this thief was a tiny baby in his mother's arms.

And now he's a convicted criminal hanging from a cross in disgrace. And so for the thief in Luke 23, this is the absolute worst day.

Today is a terrible day. But when he turns to Jesus, everything changes. When he turns to Jesus, today becomes the greatest day of his life.

And for the thief, that just captures the astonishing transformation that Jesus brings. It's the astonishing change that the gospel promises for all who come to faith in Jesus.

[5 : 55] And we'll see a little bit more as we unpack this, the rest of this verse together. But for the thief, today is such a significant word. But today is also a crucial word for us to think about in terms of our theology.

And this is just an opportunity to talk about a wee aspect of our theology that we don't maybe talk about enough, but that's very important for us to think about. It's getting us to think about what happens when we die. Because this thief is about to die.

And in Jesus' words, he's revealing something to us about what happens after that. Now, when we say that, okay, what happens when we die? At a very basic level, we'll say, well, the Christian faith is saying that if you're a Christian, if you become a Christian, if you put your trust in Jesus, when you die, you will go to heaven.

Absolutely true. But there is actually a little bit more detail to that in terms of the theology about eschatology, what we mean about what happens beyond this life.

And so I want to just unpack that a little bit because this is probably one of the few places in the Bible where we can unpack this together. And I'm going to bring before you a phrase that theologians very often use.

[7 : 03] They very often use a phrase called the intermediate state. Now, you might be thinking, what is that? Well, I want to spend the next two or three minutes explaining that to you. So in terms of our salvation, right now we are here, okay?

Okay, for all those of you who don't come to Carlyway very often, I like drawing pictures. So this is you. So that's your body, okay? And please forgive me, this is not a very accurate drawing.

This is your soul in there too, okay? So right now, we are a unity of body and soul. And the technical term for that is a psychosomatic unity.

Now, psycho doesn't mean nutcase. Psycho is from the Greek word for soul. And so you are a, and soma is the Greek word for body, a soul-body unity, a psychosomatic unity.

That's what you are. And you are that because what can you do right now? You can look at your physical body and you can think. Thinking's not physical. Thinking is a spiritual matter, a non-physical matter. You are both of these things.

[7 : 59] All of us are, okay? So that's what we are right now. And the ultimate goal, oh, what did I do there? The ultimate goal, so this is us now.

And the ultimate goal in God's redemptive purposes is that you and I will be this again. Body and soul together.

And so that will happen in the new heavens and the new earth. I'll just call it the new creation, okay? And that new creation will be established when Jesus returns.

Our bodies will be raised, reunited with our souls, psychosomatic unity again, body and soul unity again together. The big difference, though, of course, is that the presence and power and effect of sin has gone forever.

Big question is, what happens in between? And this in-between bit is what we're referring to with the intermediate state. Because when we die, what happens to our bodies?

[9 : 01] I keep pressing the wrong button. There we are. When we die, what happens to our bodies? The bodies go to the grave. Please forgive that. Not very good drawing. Our body goes to the grave.

Our soul goes to be with Jesus. That's what death is. Separation. of body and soul, okay? And so, what we are thinking about here is this intermediate state.

Our soul goes to be with Jesus. Our body waits in the grave. And the reason why I wanted to talk about this is because this is what happens to the thief. The thief's going to die.

And his body's going to a grave. In fact, his body's probably going to be thrown into just a rubbish tip outside Jerusalem because he's just a criminal. But Jesus is saying, you, your soul, you'll be with me today.

And so, that's emphasizing to us that yes, when we die, our souls will go to be with Jesus. Our bodies wait in the grave. And when Jesus returns, we are raised, reunited with him.

[10 : 06] Jesus doesn't say to the thief, eventually, you'll be with me in paradise once I return. No, he says, today, you'll be with me in paradise. And so, this is an important aspect of our theology.

And like I said, it's one that we don't really talk about very often. It's captured very well in the shorter catechism. The catechism, maybe many of you learned some of the catechism when you were wee.

Catechism is a very old book but a very, very useful book because it just answers questions like this. The language is a bit old but the topics are really helpful. So, question 38 and 39 are capturing this.

So, question 37, sorry, question 37 and 38. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? In other words, what happens to you immediately when you die? Souls of believers at their death are made perfect in holiness to immediately pass into glory.

Their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in the grave to the resurrection. That's everything my picture tried to draw. Okay? That's this bit here in the middle. And what happens when Christ returns at the resurrection?

[11 : 08] Believers being raised up in glory shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted on the day of judgment, made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity. Now, two important points to mention here.

To some of you, this might sound like a ridiculous fantasy. So, you might be looking at that and thinking, I don't believe any of that.

That's just, that just seems ridiculous. But, I want you to think about this very, very rationally and very logically. Okay? There has to be a destiny for us.

There has to be some kind of destiny. We're moving along through time. We're heading towards the end of our lives. There is some destiny at the end of that. Now, unfortunately, I have to rub out my magnificent diagram because I want to draw something else.

There has to be a destiny at the end of our lives. You're here. Where is it heading? And I'm going to give you four options. There's non-existence.

[12 : 13] Nothing. Nothing. There's unconscious existence whereby, you know, you just return to being atoms.

Atoms don't disappear and you just, your body gets just, whatever, dismantled by decay and you just, there's just unconscious existence. Stuff goes on forever. Or, there's some kind of mystical existence there's like the other side, the horizon beyond or whatever, I don't know, there's something mystical.

Or, there is body and soul existence in a renewed creation. And that's the Bible's version. Okay? So, I can't think of any other options than those four.

Okay? Now, the rational thing I want you to think about is, of those four, which one do you have evidence of? Which one have you seen? That one?

No. That one? No. That one? No. That one? It's all around you.

[13 : 25] And so, what I'm trying to say is that what the Bible is promising is a renewed version of everything else that we see every single day.

And the other alternatives, you know, we think, oh, well, non-existence. Nobody's ever experienced that. You can only hold that view by faith. Unconscious existence, no one's experienced that.

Mystical existence, no one's experienced that. And so, what I'm trying to say is that if you think through this brutally logically, the only one that actually has real evidence around us every single day is the claim that the Bible makes.

So, if you think it's a ridiculous fantasy, I want you to think about the alternatives and just weigh that up in your mind. But the other important point is that for many of you, it might not be that this is a ridiculous fantasy.

It might just be that this seems like an impossible dream. because the day that we die or that our loved ones die is the day we utterly dread. That today is the absolute worst day.

[14 : 33] And the whole thing I want you to see is that Jesus reverses that. And that's why the whole of the Christian faith centers on the resurrection of Jesus, that he rose from the dead.

And that's what gives us hope hope that what the promise, the promises that the Bible makes are promises that are absolutely going to be correct. And if the resurrection is true and if you are trusting in Jesus, that means that when today is going to be actually the last day of your life, it's an irrevocable theological certainty that it's going to be okay.

That's the promise that Jesus makes to everyone who's trusting in him. Right, that's today. What about you? The you in this verse is a very fascinating word as well.

It's the thief. And so, and at one level we don't know much about him. We don't know his background. We don't really know what crime he committed. Don't know how old he was. Don't even know his name. But what we do know is important. It's very important.

We do know that he's absolutely messed up his life. And as we said, once he was a little boy, once he was a toddler, once he was a child, once he was a teenager, and his life plan was not to be crucified as a criminal.

[15 : 55] But somewhere along the lines he's made terrible choices. He's gone into the wrong crowd. He's walked down an awful path and now everything's fallen apart.

He's convicted. He's condemned. He's about to die. And at the same time he knows next to nothing about Jesus. And he's done nothing to make him religiously acceptable.

He's just a waste of space that they want rid of. And we actually get even more detail from Mark and Matthew because they tell us that initially both the criminals were having a go at Jesus.

They were mocking him and reviling him like the rest of the crowd. It's only at the last minute only at the last minute that this thief starts to realize the truth.

And so this you in verse 43 is a mess a disgrace and a failure. He does not deserve to be okay. But everything changes for him.

[17 : 00] First he starts to realize more about himself. He says actually we deserve this. And at the same time he starts to realize more about Jesus he realizes he's done nothing wrong.

And then he turns to Jesus with these amazing words. Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom. There's loads that we could say about that. Just want to highlight two things.

One this man's past was so complicated. So much mess. So many mistakes. So much that he wished was different. His past was so complicated. But the second crucial thing is that his words to Jesus are so simple.

And that's such an important lesson. The gospel addresses the complexity of our past with simplicity. The gospel wants a simple response to all the complexity of the spiritual dilemma and predicament that we're in.

In other words the gospel's request to you and to me is to respond to the complexity of our lives with the simplicity of faith. Now the place where you see this so perfectly is in children.

[18 : 13] And this is one of the ways in which the call to worship we read at the start. Jesus is saying look if you want to come to me you need to be like a child. And so you look at children you are learning crucial lessons. Because children's needs are very complex but their response to those needs are very simple.

So Callum doesn't come to Alexander and Alanis and say my calorie reserves have dipped a little low my blood sugar is a little off balance and my nutrients are deficient.

Just yells I'm hungry give me food. And nor does he come to them and say I am suffering an immediate personal hygiene crisis and I need your attention.

He does not say that. He just grunts a little, cheeks go red, smell tells the rest of the story and the nappy change has to happen. And most importantly, most importantly I popped round to see Alanis and Alexander last week I think and Alexander had woken up from his nap and sorry Alexander's nap that's hilarious no.

Callum had woken up from his nap and you know when we once wake up from their nap they're always a bit cranky and Alexander was holding Callum and Callum doesn't say dad I feel a bit insecure I'm a bit unsure about this strange guy who's in the room I'm feeling curious but vulnerable I need protection and security he doesn't say all of that what did he do he just buried his head in his dad's shoulder.

[19 : 39] So there's all these complex needs and all those needs are met by responding in beautiful simplicity and that if you learn anything this morning this is what I want you to learn that's how the gospel works all of us are actually a complex mess for some people like the thief everyone can see the mess for most of us we keep everything very very hidden and there's different degrees of mess some people's lives really do descend into awful chaos others not were able to actually go through life and in many ways many aspects of our lives by God's grace and kindness to us stay steady and good that's wonderful but all of us underneath we have fears we have insecurities we have guilt we're all complicated and all of those bruises and challenges and failures and mistakes and everything that's in all of our hearts all of the same source it's all from the reality of sin and we can so easily think that our complex spiritual needs need a complex spiritual response so we think

I need to learn this I need to be able to articulate that I need to be able to experience this I need to be able to avoid that and we make everything so complicated and that was the approach of the Pharisees that's been the approach of every legalistic approach to religion ever since that my complex needs need a complex response that's not the gospel Jesus knows that our lives are complicated Jesus knows that the you is always complicated but the response he wants is always simple he just wants us all to trust him with a childlike faith and it does not matter what stage of life you're at and it's really important to remember that the conversion of the thief on the cross is easy to misunderstand sometimes we can look at something like that or we can look at other people who have a spectacular conversion and we can think to ourselves well I'm not as bad as that therefore I'm not good enough we can think I'm not bad enough therefore I'm not good enough so you think well I'm not like the thief on the cross so maybe the gospel is not for me it's only people who are actually at that level of mess that's not what's trying to be explained here what's being emphasized here is that if

Jesus can do it for that guy boy he can do it for you no one's too bad too good too successful too full of failures too early too late too young too old too talented too foolish too settled too scared too confident too hesitant whatever doesn't matter the message of Jesus to every single you in here is come to me and no matter what lies behind your you if you come to him everything's going to be okay third thing we see is Jesus' words will be with me I'm going to whiz through three things super fast here number one these words describe an astonishing privilege I just want in your heads for a moment compare God the son Jesus Christ perfect in every way and a thief who's totally messed up if there's two people who do not belong together it's those two and yet the son says to the thief you will be with me and for any sinner to be with a son is such an astounding privilege number two these words reveal an amazing desire on the part of

Jesus and this is something that's so worth reflecting on the desire that is expressed in these words and the desire that is expressed in the gospel Jesus wants you with him it's captured so magnificently in Jesus' prayer in John 17 24 father I desire that they also whom you've given me may be with me where I am Jesus wanted this thief with him Jesus wants you with him his great desire is that his people that all who trust in him will be with him forever it is never what we deserve it is forever what he desires so we see amazing privilege amazing desire and thirdly we see the beautiful togetherness that lies at the heart of God's purposes in the gospel because the with me is not just about

Jesus and the thief the with me is about Jesus the thief and every other person who puts their faith in Jesus and that's so important to recognize sin and death are aiming at separation the aim of sin is separation separation of you and God separation of you and your loved ones separation that's what death is aiming at the gospel is aiming at togetherness the gospel is aiming to undo that destructive power of death and sin that separates right now we enjoy amazing togetherness today's an amazing example together such a precious moment that togetherness is edging its way towards separation and some of you I know some of you here are actually are sitting here saying I'm already there because the person or the people who are most dear to me are gone our precious togetherness now is edging towards separation all the time the gospel has come to reverse that so that for every single one who trusts in Jesus our togetherness now is a glimpse of the amazing togetherness we will enjoy with him and that togetherness is everything we long for everything that we need and again you see this so beautifully in families we call him has a thousand needs every day he doesn't really know what they are but he knows that if his mommy or his daddy are with him then everything is going to be okay and if you're a Christian if you become a

[26 : 03] Christian then Jesus promises that you will be with him and if we are with him then everything is going to be okay last of all Jesus says today you'll be with me in paradise this is one of my favorite words in the whole bible last year for those of you we did a study called five cool Greek words and we looked at five cool Greek words in the New Testament the New Testament was written in Greek we looked at five words this is our sixth cool Greek word because this is a very cool word the word paradise is actually it's a Greek word here in the Bible Luke was written in Greek but it actually comes from a Persian word and the Persian word means garden and if you look at the Greek of Luke 23 and if you look at the Greek of Genesis chapter 2 you discover something amazing so Old Testament written in Hebrew New Testament written in

Greek but there was a Greek translation of the Old Testament if you look at the Greek version of the Old Testament and the original Greek of Luke 23 you see something very cool and the verses we need to compare are Genesis 2 8 Luke 23 43 I don't normally do this but you're all totally capable of getting this I put the Greek up and I'm not an expert in Greek but I can read it for you as I read it I that means in the last word he said to him did you hear the word that came up twice same word what's that telling you what's that telling you it's telling you that the stunning beauty of the garden of

Eden set out for us on the opening pages of the Bible is a glimpse of the amazing beauty and wonder of heaven and here you see how the whole Bible fits together so magnificently and it's telling us that everything that you can imagine in the garden of Eden and all the glimpses of Eden that remain and there are many glimpses of Eden that remain there are so many things that are beautiful in our creation today is a beautiful day I think we picked the wrong date for the baptism because normally McKeever family events you need a storm or a kale so today is a lovely day and it's a glimpse it's an echo of Eden the beautiful world around us all of that's pointing you to what Jesus wants to give you and so I've been saying the whole time that God's promise is going to be okay do you know that's not actually true the promise is not it's going to be okay the promise is it's going to be absolutely amazing it's going to be absolutely amazing but the crucial thing we have to recognize is that as

Jesus promises paradise he is as Jesus promises paradise he's hanging in the place of desperate suffering and I'm going to just pick out two things for one more minute as we finish as Jesus promises paradise he's hanging on the cross and that's teaching us two crucial lessons that I want to finish with number one sometimes reaching the best points in life come from doing something that does not feel easy at all reaching the best points in life comes from doing something that does not feel easy at all and parenting definitely confirms that because I'm quite sure that becoming parents has been the hardest most daunting most tiring most intense thing that Alanis and Alexander have ever done I'm sure the last year of their lives has just been the full on year of daunting most tiring most challenging thing that that a couple will ever do and what

I love about Alanis and Alexander is that in the midst of all that exhaustion and tiredness and intensity they are absolutely beaming and loving every moment we call them I'm sure turn their lives upside down and they wouldn't change it for a thing parenting is a daunting step that's never regretted becoming a Christian a daunting step telling people you're a Christian a daunting step becoming a member of the church a daunting step never regretted and then the second thing is that you know things can feel daunting and hard for us but the fact that Jesus is hanging on the cross is telling us that the pathway for us to get to paradise was unbelievably hard for him he endured unspeakable agony so that you and I can have eternal life and that's telling us that ultimately

[32 : 03] Jesus is the only person who can promise you that everything really will be okay and that's exactly what he brought you here to tell you and and all along throughout this whole narrative in Luke 23 the thing that we can easily forget is that on the other side of Jesus is another thief who looks at Jesus and says no not interested and it's unbelievable that he would do that and yet so many people are doing the same if you're sitting here today and you're thinking I just want to know that everything will be okay when I die then the gospel is everything that you need amen let's pray Lord

Jesus we thank you so much for your promise to us for everything that you've done for us and how we long for you and how we need you and we pray that for all of us that you just help us to take that next step to follow you and to live our lives for you and to make you the foundation that we build everything else on and we pray that that every single one of us will be able to to know the reality of your great promises in our lives bless us be with us and lead us we pray amen we're going to sing together again we're singing psalm 27 psalm 127 sorry psalm 127 and this is a wonderful psalm to sing it's basically setting out the importance of having the Lord as the foundation of our lives and also the way in which God works his purposes out and his blessings out through the generations of families as each new generation is born and so we're just being reminded in these words that the Lord is our rock he's our foundation and he's the one that gives us everything that's good in our lives so Angus will lead us and we'll stand and sing together and let's the Lord build up the house it's wilderness toiling name unless he keeps the city safe may may be in the washing day in pain you rise before the dawn and lay down the earthly keep that few needs are for food to eat he gives his loved one sleep sons are the precious heritage have a blessing from the

Lord the children that are born to us are truly his reward like the rose in our warriors son and children of once year the man whose quivers full of men is blessed by God in doom such men will not be built to shame that will not their fate when they contend against their!

who them in the gate will the girls back in in a moment I'm going to ask Alanna to come up first of all I'm going to read a short passage from Acts chapter 2 this is when Peter is giving a sermon on the day of Pentecost telling all the clouds in Jerusalem that Jesus is the fulfillment of everything that the Old Testament has promised. And so he's going through the various aspects of what the Old Testament promised, how Jesus fulfills them, and how in Jesus's resurrection we find the hope that we have always been waiting for. So we're picking up the narrative at Acts 2.29, and Peter's speaking here saying, Brothers, I may say to you with confidence that the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being there for a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, to the grave, nor did his flesh see corruption. So that's just echoing that the Old Testament is promising that the Savior would rise again, and Peter's unpacking that. And he's saying, It's Jesus who's the fulfillment.

This Jesus, verse 32, God raised up, and of that were all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he's poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend to the heavens, but he himself says, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool.

[38 : 29] Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. Again, Jesus is the one they were waiting for. When they heard this, they were cut to the heart. They said to Peter and the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, but the promise is for you and for your children, for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. Now these words are capturing for us how everything that the Old Testament was looking forward towards has been fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus. And one of the things, that's really key for how to understand the Bible, everything in the Old Testament has been fulfilled in Jesus in the new. And there's this narrative that's working its way through all the pages of Scripture. And one of the things that comes up again and again and again as you walk through that narrative, all the way through the pages of Scripture to the coming of Jesus, is that God, that God in his purposes has an eye on children. There's so much emphasis on the next generation, those who are being born, those who are being born, those who are being born. And sometimes the Bible will even talk about those who are still to be born. And God in his purposes is always thinking about the next generation. And so that pattern is seen very clearly again and again in the Old Testament.

You see family as one of the key threads that holds the whole Bible together. And in Jesus, you see all of that fulfilled. And it was captured very well in the words of Peter, where he's saying, the promises are for you and for your children, that the next generation are part of my purposes.

And that makes perfect sense. So boys and girls, I want to ask anyone here, who here has been to Shabbos school? Okay, anyone been to Shabbos school? Not like right now, like in your life, in Shabbos school.

Who's gone to Shabbos school? All right, grownups, anyone's gone to Shabbos school? A few here. Okay, excellent, excellent. Very, very good. Okay, what happens if from now on, every single family in Shabbos, Carlway, whatever else, down this west side, if all of us send our kids to Sconthe of Sheer and Barvis or to Briested school? What happens to Shabbos school? What would happen to it? You're close.

[40 : 56] What happened to Mary? It would close. You would have no school. How many, any kids here play for Western Thistle? Excellent, excellent. So Western Thistle is the local football team. And at a junior level, it's a combination of the Westside football team and the Carloway football team. And so at a junior level, everyone's together. And so when you hit senior, those who live in the West, the West side of end of things will play for Westside. Those who live in the Carloway end of things will play for Carloway. What would happen if all of the Western Thistle kids played for Westside? What would happen to Carloway? Would Carloway have a team? No. We would also stop being friends, just so you know.

And so what I'm seeing here and what I'm trying to say here is just it all makes sense, okay? If you don't have a next generation coming into something, you won't have that thing. You won't have a school.

You won't have a football team. What will happen to our church if the next generation never comes to church? And if the next generation never believes in Jesus, what will happen to your church? Gone.

And I remember one person, a friend of mine, saying to me, the church is only ever one generation away from extinction. And it's so important. This is why it's so clear that God's purposes are always looking for the next generation. And that's why to baptize Callum today is such a privilege for us, because in baptizing him, we are saying that Callum is part of our church family, and we are wanting him to grow up to know about Jesus, to love Jesus, and for that to be the foundation that he builds his life on. And that's true for all of you who have been baptized. That's what your parents are wanting for you. Now being baptized, it's not like nothing magic. There's nothing fancy about this water. It's just plain water. And it's just there as a sign to help us remember that Jesus has come to wash away our sins. And it's also a seal that is confirming God's promise to us, that if we trust in Jesus, we are washed from our sins. And so it's teaching us about what Jesus has come to do. It's confirming to us that Jesus will keep his promises. He's not doing anything magic or fancy or anything like that. It's just helping us to see physically what Jesus has come to do in our hearts. And that promise is for all of us. It's for our children. And it's a reminder of how much we need the next generation to rise up, to trust Jesus, to follow Jesus, to be part of the church, so that the generation beyond them will hear the gospel. Because not only if the next generation doesn't come to church, we have no church, what happens to the generation after that?

There's no one there to even tell them. And that's why God's purposes always have the next generation in mind. And that's why this is such a joyful moment for us, because we've been reminded of the precious promises of Jesus. We're seeing a beautiful family come into our church family. We see another amazing little child born in our community. We rejoice in that, but we're also being reminded of the importance of the foundation of Jesus Christ being laid for the next generation and the generations beyond them.

[44 : 32] Okay, so I am going to ask Alanis and Alexander and Callum to come up, and I'll just pop you over here. And we're going to just ask them some very simple questions. And so they're making promises.

And then I'm going to ask you guys to make a promise as well in a moment. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to get you guys to stand, and we're going to put the promises up on the screen here as we read them together. So I'm going to read through these together. Then I'm going to ask the congregation also, you're participating in this as well. And then we'll baptize, we call them. And then we'll pray.

And then there's cake, which is excellent. Okay, so just the questions here are set out. They're just really capturing the key claims of the Christian faith, that the Bible is precious and special. It's the word of God, that we believe in the Christian understanding of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that Jesus is the Savior that we are trusting and depending on, and that the future we promise with God's help to raise this amazing wee boy in God's way. So I'll ask you these questions.

Okay, so do you believe the Bible to be the word of God and the only rule of faith and life? Do you believe in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as revealed in the word of God?

Do you profess faith in the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God and the only Savior of sinners and your own personal Savior? Yes. Do you promise independence on God's promised help by your prayers, teaching, and example, to bring up your child in the instruction and discipline of the Lord?

[46 : 08] And you all, do you promise to pray for Colm and love him as part of this covenant community of God's people and to guide him by precept and example? Excellent. Thank you very much. Okay, so I'm going to get you to come over here. I'm going to arm you with a towel so you're ready. I'll let you come around, Alanis, as well. Okay, I'll just be, you can just stay there, Colm. You're doing great. Okay, right?

Okay, ready. This is going to be a bit cold. Okay. Colm, Akiva, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen. Let's pray together.

Amen. Father, we thank you so, so much for such a special and precious moment for us as a church and for Alexander and Alanis and Colm as a family. And we want to commit them to your care. We thank you for them so much, for the joy that it brings to us all to see them settling in our community, to see them as part of our church family, and to see them raising, we call them, with such love and care and devotion. And may they just know your blessing, your presence and your guidance at every step they take. And for we call them, we commit them to your care and pray that as he grows up and as he enjoys the love and care of his parents and the wider family, we pray that he would know more and more of your love and peace and joy as well. And may you be the foundation upon which all our lives are built, that we would follow you and serve you. And we want to pray for the next generations, in our own community and in the communities beyond us, that these little ones, being born and growing, would know you and love you and be able to take the good news of the gospel to the generations yet unborn. So please bless Alanis and Alexander and Colm and all the wider family and friends. We commit them to your care. We thank you for these precious moments and we worship and praise you, our amazing God, through your Son, our Saviour Jesus. Amen.