

The Lord Bless You

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[0 : 00] Do you have a seat? Wonderful. Well, boys and girls, grown-ups, it's wonderful to open the Bible together, isn't it?

And to think about what God has to say to us. I'm going to pray, and we're going to pray together as we do that, and then we're going to hear God's words.

Let's pray. The author to the Hebrews writes, But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

God, our Father, how we thank you that we get to come to you today and meet with you in the joyful gathering of all your people and of the angels in heaven.

[1 : 26] How we thank you that we can come to Jesus and his blood poured out for us on the cross. And as we do that, Father, we pray that you would bless us and keep us, that you would lift up your face on us and we would know your peace and grace.

Lord, pray that we would hear you speak now by your word and by your spirit and feed us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, boys and girls, it's so, so good to have you in with us for worship today.

We love it when we get to worship you. Not worship you. That was awful. Dear me. Rewind. Okay. It's not what we learned in our series on worship, is it, at all? No, no. We love it when we get to worship God with you because you are part of our church family and you have a special place in God's worship.

Do you know, I hope you know this, maybe you've talked about it at home or maybe in the car, that upstairs in church we've been spending some time thinking about what we do on Sunday, what happens in church.

[2 : 45] Now, I wonder if you can have a go. Can you tell me some things that happen in church on a Sunday when we're all together like this? What are some things that go on?

Maybe you can think of some of the things we've already done so far in our service. What have we done? Not sure? That's okay.

We've sung to God, haven't we? We've stood up. We've sung to God and we've prayed to God.

We've heard God's word. The Bible has been read as well, hasn't it, as we're here together.

Those are some things that we do. We listen to a sermon, lots of words, lots of listening, isn't it?

And we hear from God in that way. But last Sunday, we thought a little bit about two other things, about baptism and communion.

And I think you guys have seen both those things happen, right? You stay up for when we baptize someone. Maybe you remember when Alistair and Anna were baptized a couple of weeks ago.

[3 : 53] Remember that? And you come up as well to see communion on a Sunday morning. We always love to see you up in the corner up there. We love having you with us for that.

And we thought about why we do these things and how special those things are. And we thought about how special it is that God says that children in the church should also be baptized.

Boys and girls, like some of you may have been baptized. That it's not just for grown-ups. It's for children too. And you know, that means that God wants you to be part of his family.

God wants you in with us as we worship him. God wants to speak to you and meet with you and hear from you. Hear your voice praying to him.

And so we love it when you're with us. Some of you will be a little bit more over the summer. And if you are in with us over the summer, there are actually some sheets on the back table with some pencils.

[5 : 01] Maybe you want to do some drawing or some writing, something to help you to listen. Maybe some of the grown-ups want that as well. There's enough for everyone. And maybe get your mom or dad or whoever brings you to church and just ask them lots and lots of questions, okay?

If you're in here, sit next to someone. Someone, maybe not someone, maybe someone else in the church that you really like. Just plonk yourself down next to them, okay? Take a different grown-up every week, okay?

And just ask them questions. Get them to tell you what's happening now. What's going on? What are we doing? Okay? And listen to what they say so that we can understand. Now, there's lots of talking in the church service, okay?

And it's hard, isn't it, to concentrate all the time. But it's worth it because of where we are right now. Now, here's a trick question.

Where are we right now? Where are you guys right now? Where are you? Here. Oh, love it. That's a brilliant answer.

[6 : 09] We're right here. Fantastic. Good. We're right here. What did you think, Johnny? Where are we? Not sure. Right here. We're right here, aren't we? That's a great answer.

But maybe we think, you know, we're just in church. We're just in the building. We're just sitting on our seat, okay? This is just where we come every Sunday. It sounds like a really easy question.

Actually, it was a trick question. Because the Bible says when we come to church on Sunday and we're in a service like this, we are going up a mountain. We're going up a mountain.

Did you know that? Now, you might think, what? This is not a mountain. Your mountain has rivers and trees and rocks, right? There's none of that here, is there?

And in a way, right, you're completely right. There's none of that. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12, you have not come to a mountain that you can touch.

[7 : 05] So it's not the kind of mountain that you can walk up or take a picnic, okay? Way back in history, that is where God's people went to meet and to worship God on an actual mountain, right, with rocks and trees.

But there wasn't just rocks and trees. There was fire and darkness and clouds and maybe lightning and the sound of a trumpet blasting, right?

So all those things were going on and a voice, a voice that made the people who heard it say, we don't want to hear anymore. Please stop talking.

That sounds like a pretty scary mountain, doesn't it? Would you go for a walk on that mountain? No chance. No chance. No way. Fantastic.

Maybe just once. Yeah. Uh-huh. Fantastic.

[8 : 19] Fantastic. Love it, James. James would go up a billion times because it wasn't the mountain making those noises. It was God talking. I love that, James. That is fantastic. But do you know something? Actually, the people who were there, the scariest bit for them, the scariest bit wasn't the fire or the clouds or the trumpet or anything.

It was actually what God was saying. It was actually God's voice. And they said, whoa, actually Moses was there. And do you know what Moses, it says in the Bible, the sight was so terrifying that Moses said, I am trembling with fear, right?

I am not sure I would go up that mountain. You can go, James, right? You tell me what God says. I would love that. Right? What a great thing. We love to hear from God, don't we?

That is brilliant. But what a great thing that coming to church is not like that. Coming to church is not like standing on a volcano that is about to erupt, is it?

And it's not like going into a really scary storm. Maybe I think some of your friends or some of our friends need to know that, don't they? That coming to church is not a scary thing.

[9 : 31] Maybe they think that. But what sort of mountain are we on when we are in church? Well, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12, but you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Now, that is a completely different mountain. And not just a different mountain like, I don't know, Ben Nevis and Mount Everest or some other two mountains that you can think of.

Not just like that. It's a different mountain in the way that that scary mountain was a mountain that people could see and touch and walk on. But this is a mountain that you can't see and you can't touch and you can't walk on.

Because it's not a place on earth. It's a place in heaven. It's the heavenly Jerusalem. So, here's a question.

What is in heaven? Or who is in heaven? What do you reckon? Angels. Angels. Brilliant. What else? You want to join me?

[10:46] God. Yeah, fantastic. Anything else? Well, let's find out, shall we? What's in heaven? Who's in heaven? It says here, this is where we come to church on a Sunday.

Listen. It says, you have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly. Well, right? So, you can't see angels.

But when we come as a church family like this to worship God, the Bible says we come to the same place where all of the angels worship God. Isn't that amazing?

Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? That right now, you guys, you are worshiping God with the angels. And who else is there? That's amazing. That's amazing.

It says, you have come to God, to the judge of all. You know, how brilliant is that? Now, I don't know if you guys ever feel like this, but you wake up on a Sunday and you think, I just don't feel like it today.

[11:48] I don't want to go to church. I would rather stay at home. Maybe I want to go to the park. Maybe it's your friend's birthday and you want to do that. You just think, I just don't feel like going to church today.

But do you know what? God comes to church. God comes to church every Sunday so that when we come here together like this, we are going to where God says he will be to meet us.

And we get to spend special time with him. But you say, God's in heaven. Right? God's in heaven. We're on earth.

How does that work? Yeah, but remember the mountain. We've come to the place in heaven where God is. We've come to the city of the living God.

So it's a bit like maybe there's someone really, really special to you or really important to you. Maybe it's someone on TV that you like.

[12:52] Maybe it's one of your friends. And maybe it's someone in your family. Maybe it's your granny. Maybe it's one of your friends if you're on earth. Maybe it's one of your friends. And if that person, that really special and important person said to you, come over to my house.

and let's spend some special time doing things together. Wouldn't that be really cool? We would love to do that, wouldn't we? Well, every Sunday, God says to his family, come over and I'll spend some special time with you together.

We wouldn't want to miss that, would we? To be where God is, that would be really cool. It says angels there, God is here, who else? The spirits of the righteous made perfect.

Now, when people who trust in Jesus die, where do they go? To heaven. To heaven, okay.

So when we come here, who do we get to worship God with? All the Christians who have ever lived in every part of the world who have died with their trust in Jesus, they are there in heaven worshiping God and we get to worship God with them.

[14:08] When we come to church, we get to sing with them and pray with them, the whole church. Past and present all over the world and in heaven, we come together on a Sunday to worship God.

Now, we have to remember and be really careful, don't we, that we can't see or touch or speak to people who have died. We're not with them in the way that we're here together in this room.

But one day when Jesus comes back, we will see and touch and speak with them again, people who we love who are in heaven. But here's something really special.

Until then, we get to worship God with them every Sunday. How special is that? And who else is in heaven?

Angels, God, Christians who have died. Last but not least, who is in heaven? But Jesus. You have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

[15:21] Jesus and his blood. Now, if I asked you guys, who leads our worship here on a Sunday? Who do you think?

Who leads the worship on a Sunday? Not sure? That's okay. That's okay. Perhaps, I reckon if we asked some of the grown-ups, they wouldn't be totally sure.

Well, the Bible says before anyone stands up at the front of church to lead the service or the singing or the prayers or to preach a sermon. More than me or any of those people, Jesus leads our worship.

Jesus is our worship leader because he leads us into the presence of God. Right? I can't bring you to God and good music can't bring you to God and silence and a reverent atmosphere can't bring you to God either.

Only Jesus can bring you to God because he is the mediator of our relationship with him. That just means that Jesus is the only one who stands in between us and God and Jesus says, come with me and I'll bring you to God.

[16:39] Only he can say that. So good job that Jesus is here when we come to church on Sunday, right? Or we would be stuffed because it wouldn't matter what we did or how we did it.

We couldn't come to God and worship him without Jesus and the blood of his sacrifice on the cross. So that's why it's so, so good and so brilliant to have you guys here with us every Sunday and here with us in the service as well because we come together and we get to meet with God and Jesus.

And it's not like to go on a roller coaster. Have you guys been to like a, what do you call that, theme park with roller coasters, something like that? Or maybe like a water park or something?

And maybe there's rides that you can't go on because there's a height limit. Well, do you know coming to church, being in the service like this, it's not like that. Okay, there's no age restriction on being in a service in church because there's no age restriction on getting to be with God and worship him and hear his voice and trust in Jesus.

It doesn't matter how little you are, how young you are, you can all do that. And so I, the grown-ups here, we love you guys being here on a Sunday. We want you to know that.

[18:07] We want to talk to you, get to know you as well because we want you to feel really, really loved and known and welcome when you come to church. That's what we want for you guys.

Now, I've done a lot of talking. Do you guys like talking? Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Good.

Good. You can say yes. That's talking. Good. Yeah, fantastic. You like talking? That is wonderful. That's okay.

That's okay. We can have a chat after. That's okay. Now, we've been thinking up here about our worship time as a conversation, like talking to God.

I don't know who does most talking in your house, mom or dad or brother or sister, maybe you.

Okay, one of the things that I've really enjoyed this year is getting to talk more with Caleb and Samuel.

[19:13] For a long time, it's been pretty one-way. It's increasingly two-way. A little story, the other day, me and Caleb were just at home ourselves, and Caleb was running back and forth getting me little cups of coffee in this little mug.

I think he's got me pegged. And he'd sent me through to the living room and said, stay here. And he was running back and forth to the kitchen. And he did that sort of three or four times. And I said, oh, are you going to get me some more coffee?

He said, no. I said, oh, why is that? And he said, I kid you not, he said, I gave you loads and loads. Where did he learn that?

All right, that was me told. But learning to talk together is really fun. It's really lovely, isn't it? It's a great part of our relationship. And boys and girls, when we come to church, when you grow up going to church, you guys are learning to talk with God.

Now, at first, it's very one-sided. When you're very, very little, you don't have much to say to God. You can't understand very much. But as you grow up, you're learning, aren't you, to sing the songs in church.

[20:29] You're learning to pray to God. You're learning how to listen to God as someone gets up and reads from a Bible and preaches a sermon. Right? We're all learning that, aren't we?

But you guys, growing up, you're learning to join in the conversation that we have with God at church every week. And there's so much joy that we have in that, isn't there?

There's so much, we find it so fun and lovely to talk together. And, you know, it makes God's heart sing when we join in. God loves to talk with you, to speak to you, and to hear your voices.

But today, as we kind of round off, we are thinking especially about the end of the conversation. So what happens at the very end of the service?

You guys are in for this, aren't you? You come up during the song. What happens? So right before everyone starts talking and gets their tea and coffee, what happens right before that?

[21 : 30] Do you know? Maybe you know and you don't know what it's called. That's okay. Me or Donald, we say some words and it's called, you all have service sheets, you can see, the benediction.

The benediction. Now that's a long word, it just means blessing. So there is a blessing at the end of the service. Now, the minister says that, me or Donald says that, but is it coming from God or is it coming from us?

Okay, who gets the last word in the conversation in our worship service? Well, we've thought about how God gets the first word in our worship. He calls us to worship and God gets the last words in our worship as well.

The benediction is coming from God to us. Or to put it really, really simply, God blesses us as we go. So he's not kind of waiting for us to be done and sitting there a bit bored, just waiting to get out the door back to his Sunday.

No, God is in charge of our worship. He leads us. He speaks first and he speaks last and he has actually most to say in between, doesn't he?

[22 : 52] And so it's right, he gets the last words in our service and his last words are to bless us. And we get that from places like our reading that Diane did for us.

The Lord says to Moses, get Aaron and the priests to give my blessing to the people. 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 his face towards you and give you peace. The New Testament kind of version of that is the blessing that you'll know from 2 Corinthians 13, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

Notice that kind of three-fold pattern, the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, the grace of Jesus, the love of God, the fellowship or the presence of the Holy Spirit so that the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit blesses us at the end of our service.

So that just like, you know, maybe you guys have family who live in other places, maybe you phone them sometimes or do FaceTime or something like that, right, what do you say at the end of the conversation?

[24 : 10] Maybe you say goodbye but maybe, just before that, maybe you would say, I love you. I love you. When I spoke to my mom and dad last night and that's how we finished, we said, I love you.

Or when we put Caleb and Samuel to bed at nighttime, the last thing, one of the last things we say to them at the end of the day is, I love you. And in that same way, our conversation that we have as a church family with God, as that ends on a Sunday, God finishes our service by saying, I love you. I'm with you. I'm pleased with you. We talk about someone beaming at us, don't we? Well, that's the idea when it talks about God's face shining on us.

He lifts up his face towards us. He is smiling at us as we go from his worship. And you guys know, don't you?

You guys know how much that means when somebody, maybe mom or dad at home, maybe a teacher at school, maybe your Sunday school teachers, when somebody smiles at you, it feels really, really good, doesn't it?

[25 : 25] When somebody smiles at you, you know this person is happy with me and they love me and they're pleased with me. That means so much, doesn't it? It means so much to you when somebody frowns at us.

Maybe mom or dad, when they're cross with you and they frown at you and you think, oh, they are not happy with me. Maybe you've done something wrong. And it feels so big, doesn't it, and so bad. It's so different from when somebody smiles at you. It feels so, so good. Well, God smiles at us as we go from his worship and it should feel so, so good.

Especially when we think that we have done so much to make God cross with us and when we think that really, if he treated us the way that we deserve, he should frown at us.

But if we have come to Jesus and we've come to God through his blood, when he died on the cross, everything that we've done wrong is completely covered and God is not cross with us anymore.

[26 : 31] Instead, he is so, so happy with us because of what Jesus has done for us and he blesses us. And so part of what that means is, right, for all of us, when the benediction is said, you should receive it with your eyes open.

Okay, we instinctively want to close our eyes as if it was a prayer that we pray to God. It's not. It is God blessing his people. So let me encourage you, fight that instinct, keep your eyes open, and watch, see, and hear, and receive God's smile, his blessing, and his favor.

But more than that, the blessing that God gives means that we should come to him through Jesus. In our hearts, we should come to God through Jesus and his blood poured out on the cross.

And on a Sunday, we should come near with our hearts washed clean to spend a special time with God and to enjoy talking with him in worship and be blessed by him.

Perhaps one of the questions that you grown-ups have had through our series is, well, that's all okay on a Sunday, but what about the rest of my week? You can't I worship God when I leave through the door?

[27 : 53] Well, yes, you can. And the blessing, the benediction, it gets you ready to do that. God sends us out with his blessing so that, as Paul says in Romans 12, in view of God's mercy, we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God.

This is pure and spiritual worship. So, our set-aside time here, God sends us out with his smile, his blessing and favor, ready to live for him in the world this week.

So, as we go from his presence and from before his beaming face, changed, different, ready to live for him, let's do that.

We're going to pray in a minute, you guys would do that. Okay, as you go after a Sunday, that you guys would be ready to live for God and to trust him at home and at school and in your clubs and with your friends and neighbors and families.

Now, let's pray that together now. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Gracious Father, thank you that you bless us in Jesus, your Son.

[29 : 12] Father, how we thank you that your blessing is not just for grown-ups, but it is for your whole family, your whole covenant family. Lord, thank you that you receive little children and you bless them and put your hand on them.

And Lord, pray for the boys and girls here that they would know your blessing, they would know your peace and your grace all through their lives. Father, pray that you would bless them and grow them as they spend time learning about you as they come to church on Sunday.

Lord, pray that you would bless their families as they grow up in the knowledge of you and week to week being taught of you and by you. And Lord, pray that you would bless us all as a church family. pray, Lord, as we come together that we would know your favor in Christ and if we don't, that Lord, even today you would draw us near to yourself through your son and that we would know your forgiveness and kindness and mercy towards those who have gone astray from you.

And these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[30 : 25] Amen.