Matthew 28:19

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Preacher: Donald Macleod

[0:00] We shall turn now to the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 28, verse 19.! Matthew 28, verse 19.

Therefore go, may disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Holy Spirit.
Now this morning we baptized two of the infant members of our church, and baptism has at least two great functions.
First of all, it marks us out as the people of God. And then secondly, it reminds us what it is to be a Christian.
We are baptized in the name of the Triune God. That means that we become, in a very public way, the property of the Triune God.
[1:33] But it also means our being united with the Triune God. So that the life of God is in our soul.

It means our being caught up into the life of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
I said it indicates what it means to be a Christian. And what it means in the last days to have this experience of union with God, this experience of God's life and our own souls.
To be part of the fellowship of God himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
And I went this morning to take the risk of exploring this theme for a moment. Because what it means at last for us is this.
[2:46] That the life of the Trinity is the great pattern and the great model for our own lives.

Our own lives as the people of God. We are in the name of God. The life of God.
The life of God. The energy of God. Courses through our own personal lives. And we are called upon to live in such a way as to image forth the life of the Triune God himself.
Let's explore it for just for a moment. What is it to live a life patterned on the life of the Triune God?
It means first of all that each of us gives each other space to be himself or herself.
[3:56] It means giving each other space to be ourselves. When I look at the life of God.

I find that there is the Father. And there is the Son. And there is the Holy Spirit. They share one name.
They share one nature. They share one being. They share one glory. And yet, in that life of God, each one is different.
The Father is the Father. The Son is the Son. The Spirit is the Spirit. Each is in one or some point different from the others.
That means that God the Father gives space to God the Son to be himself.
[5:04] And God the Son gives space to God the Holy Spirit to be himself. Each person, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, occupy the same time and the same space.

And yet, each occupies that time and space differently. They share so much. And yet, each is different. And each is given space to be different.
And you know, when God made the world, God gave the world space to be itself.
God gave the world its own time and its own space. God preserves it and God governs it. And God foreordains all that happens within it.
And yet, God does so without coercing it. Without simply forcing it. God is the most important thing. Those of you who are physicists know of that principle of indeterminacy that lies at the heart of all matter.
[6:25] And yet, God is able to exercise sovereignty even though there is that contingency, that freedom for those sub-unitual.

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Sub-atomic particles to be themselves. We are told on a different scale. That all the great systems in the world are systems of chaos.
And yet, although they are so unpredictable, God controls them. And saying again, God gave the world, the universe, space to be itself.
And I am saying too, that God gives us, us as creatures, as men and women. God gives us space to be ourselves.
God gives us freedom. God gives us freedom. The ability to make our own choices and our own decisions. To pursue the paths that we ourselves deemed right and attractive.
[7:40] God gave us that space. God gave us that space. There is no coercion. There is no forcing on God's part. There is no invincible pressure upon us by God to go in some particular direction.

God gave us space. God gave us time. God gave us freedom. God gave us choice. God gave us will. God gave us will. And I am asking that if we part in our lives of the life of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.
Part in our lives of the way that they relate to each other and deal with each other. Then we give ourselves space to be ourselves.
Each of us gives the other her space. Each gives the other her time. It's true in the family that each child needs space and each one needs different space.
Because each is different. Each child often so unlike its parents and so unlike its siblings.
[9:15] Because their genotype in each instance is unique. Never before has there been this genetic combination. Each infant, each child, adolescence needs from parents and siblings and others this space to be herself.

It is so tempting on our part to wanting to be in a certain mould like ourselves.
To fulfil our dreams. To be what we deem we ought ourselves to have been. And yet I am saying in the life of God the persons do not crowd each other out.
And similarly in our own families let's give the space to each to be himself or ourself. In the community the same principle.
We have to leave each member of society the space and the freedom to make his unalongous choices.
[10:36] We must not by an imposed uniformity. By a tyrannical bureaucracy. By peer-to-repressure. Make it impossible for individuals to be themselves.

And above all in the Church of God. In this very congregation. Mustn't we apply the same principle. That here too we give each space to be himself or to be herself. Because it is sometimes tempting to try to impose uniformity.
And to forget that we must accept each other member of the congregation. As he or she is accepted by the Lord Jesus.
They came to Christ. Just as I am. Without one plea. And he accepted them just as they were.
[11:43] And we accept just as they are. We don't force. We don't coerce. We don't use our power.

Our office. Our charisma. Our seniority. To deny them the space and freedom to develop as themselves.
God lets the Son be the Son. God lets the Spirit be the Spirit. God lets you and me be just you and me.
And we must learn to let each other be just himself and herself. Give each other space. Give each other time.
Accept the sanctity of that individuality. That God has granted to each and every human being.
[12:43] And the second thing is this. That if we model our lives on the life of the Triune God.

Then we shall care for each other. Because the Trinity is a great fellowship of caring.
You remember the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. And how in that earthly life we see the dynamics, the relationships between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
We see there how deeply each cares for the other. And how committed each is to the other.
We see how at great moments of crisis. In the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father comes with the words of encouragement.
[13:50] We see it in the baptism. We see it in the baptism. This is my beloved Son. We see it at the transfiguration.

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Just on the threshold of the cross. God the Father again taking the time and making the effort to speak similar words of encouragement to a Son.
You are my Son. You are my Son. And I love you. We see too in Gethsemane. Where God sends an angel to comfort and strengthen his own Son.
This marvelous ministry on the part of the one person to the other. That sure reflects the very innermost nature and depths of the eternal God in itself.
Where God the Father serves God the Son. And God the Holy Spirit serves God the Father and God the Son. So that God as Trinity is a Trinity of caring and a Trinity of serving.
[15:08] Where the concern of each is the glory and blessedness of the other. You see it in the way the Holy Spirit ministered to God the Son during his life on earth.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. And I wonder if you just bear with me for a moment here.
There is a very great and in some ways very profound doctrine that tells us that the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father and from God the Son and from the Son.
And you would say there you see a dependence of the Holy Spirit on the Son. He proceeds from the Son. And we might even say that without the Son there would have been no Holy Spirit.
I might use such language. But then you see when it comes to another phase an aspect of truth. It is the Son who is dependent upon the Holy Spirit.
[16:23] It is the Son who is led by the Spirit. Uncomforated by the Spirit. Unencouraged by the Spirit. And I want you to learn, if you will please, one great lesson from that.

You see sometimes other people need us. And sometimes we need other people.
And it doesn't matter who you are. Or how great you are. Or how strong you are. There is a mutuality in dependence.
At one point, if I put it this way, the Holy Spirit needed God the Son. At another, God the Son needed the Holy Spirit.
Sometimes those who are weak and inexperienced in this congregation need those who are experienced, mature and strong.
[17:30] And sometimes the mature need the young. You see we have this great fallacy in the church that the congregation needs the minister.

And we forget that the minister is also part of the circle of dependence. That he too needs.
That his family needs. It doesn't matter you see who you are. The most learned, the strongest, the most eminent. Where the strongest faith is in the clearest hope and the most ardent love and the greatest gifts.
The giver must, sometimes, must indeed often be the receiver. The church of God is not made up of givers and receivers.
As if there were some givers and there were some receivers. The church of God is made up of people, all of whom are givers and all of whom are receivers. All of whom sometimes bend.
[18:40] All of whom sometimes close to breaking point. All of whom some days cannot cope.
That's the way it was in the relations within the Godhead.

The spirit who proceeds from the sun is the one who encourages him on that long, anguished road to the cross.
And so, in the church of God, sometimes we give and sometimes we need. That is the pattern of our life.
A pattern of caring in the church, in the community, in the family itself, patterned upon the life of God.
Caring the way God the Father cared for God the Son and the way that God the Spirit cared for God the Son. And so, we see that if we build our life on the life of God, then we give each other space.
[19:52] And then again, we care for each other. And then thirdly there's this. That if we pattern our lives on the life of God, then we create the kind of community there is in God himself.

In other words, God as a caring community. God as one who acts in community.
Bear with me while I unfold that. You see, it's not simply that God the Father acts as an individual. But the persons in the Godhead, they act together. When God created the world, it was created by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
Where the one was, the other was. What the one said, the other said. What the one did, the other did.

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[21:13] They created together. Now you know. Each was involved in that great moment of creation.

But each was involved differently. The Father created as Father. The Son as the Son. The Spirit as the Spirit.
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just as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit constitute not three gods, but one God. That in their love for each other, in their passion for each other's glory, in their passion for immersement in each other, and closeness to an intimacy with each other, in that centripetal passion, in there, there is one.
[28:41] And similarly, the unity of the church of God is a great consequence of the creative functioning of our diversity. So that us, together, we seek the glory of God and the good of each individual member of his family.

So, too, we are community. We are one. We have one name, as God is one name. We are the church of God. And we gather together.
And we sing together. And we pray together. And we learn together. And we sit and we eat together. And we suffer together.
And we are part in every which way, in every such way, of the one community of God. shall we then resolve this morning that we shall try to live on this plane, that we shall pattern our lives on the life of the triune God, that we shall give space, that we shall care, and that we shall stand together, together glorifying God, and together bearing witness to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
May God bless his word to us. Let us pray. Amen. Amen. O Lord, we bless you for your word.
[30:28] We are conscious, Lord, that it eludes our grasp, defies our comprehension. And yet, Lord, we can take bits and understand them.

The bit about giving space. The bit about caring. And the bit about acting together. We can take all of these bits, Lord, before we lose ourselves in the mystery.
Cover our sin. In our Saviour's name. Amen. Amen. We shall now sing to God's praise in Psalm 103.
And we sing from verse 13 to verse 18 to the children Kilmarlock. Psalm 103 at verse 13. And we sing to the end of verse 18 to God's praise.
Amen. Such pity as our Father hath may may may

[35:23] And it's a responsibility that really must weigh heavily upon us as a congregation to be called upon to share the responsibility of oversight and Christian nurture for such precious bearers of God's image.

And I would hope that we are, as a Church, conscious that we owe to the parents to share that burden with them.
I want to say a word, perhaps, to the young folk for just a moment. Sometimes the young folk feel that they're very peripheral to the Church, but baptism reminds us that, in fact, you young folk are part of the Church.
Not that one day you will be, but that today you are part of the Church. Today you are members of this congregation. You are our young members.
And I want you to feel that you belong to this building and to this whole congregation. I want you to feel that it's yours and that you can use it and enjoy it and also be responsible for it.
[36:46] I heard of a wee boy once who didn't want to go to church. And when asked why, it was because he had heard of a verse in the Bible.

It's in Psalm 69. I think it's verse 9. And that verse said, Now, I wonder why that would bother any boys and girls.
The zeal of thine house has eaten me up. And his mum asked him, Why wouldn't you go to church? Because, mum, he said, there's a zeal in that house.
And he was dead frightened of God's house. Now, you aren't frightened of God's house. It's your house. And one of which I wanted to feel a part and of which I wanted to feel very, very proud.
I'll tell you about another boy. That's myself. There's an old house in Laxdale in Lewis. It's a very, very old house.
[38:02] It's very dilapidated. That means it's very fallen down. That's a big word for fallen down. It's a very fallen down house. And yet, it's a house that I love very much.

Because it's a house that my father built at very great personal cost. And one that my mother lit up with her own presence for many, many years as well.
It's the house of many of my most happy memories and associations. And I would hope that because the church is our father's house, you would feel for it as I feel for that old place in Laxdale. The church in God isn't that dilapidated. It never is. But it is your father's house. And I want all of you young people to feel that you are part of this congregation.
And that this building, and all it stands for, is your building. Now, as I said, we welcome Christina Mary and Kenneth Massen into our fellowship as a church.
[39:23] They don't become church members by being baptized. They're baptized because they are church members already. And I want us to take them to our hearts as part of the body of Christ in this place.

And I want to feel that all of us are with our parents, part of the process of nurturing of these very precious little ones. Will you now please be upstanding?
Oh Lord, we bless you for the sacrament of baptism. Before all it signifies, in terms of your power to cleanse, and your power to enliven.
Amen. And may it be so for those who baptize here this morning. May this Lord be the pledge, may it be your pledge, of a greater life to come, for the sake of your glory in Christ.
Amen. Do you promise to raise this child in the knowledge and admonition of the Lord? may may may may God, I appoint you.
[41:15] O Lord, we ask that your blessing may follow what we've endeavoured to do in your name.

We pray that those young folk may be kept from all that threatens them, may be so kept that they will one day themselves stand and profess your name, may be so kept that they will one day themselves stand and serve your church.
We ask, Lord, that they may know such prosperity and such immunity from pain as will serve your purpose and best meet the needs of their own souls.
Preserve them, Lord, to their parents. Make them a source of joy and strength and encouragement to their parents and to all connected with them.
And grant through them enrichment to your church here on earth. We commend to you all the young folk present with us today.

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[42:34] We thank you for them. May they, Lord, come to be zealous for your house, proud of your house, proud of God's family.

And we ask that upon them as a foundation, you would build a great future for your church in this place. For the glory of your name in Christ.
Amen. Please be seated. We shall look closely to God's praise in the 23rd Psalm, the whole Psalm to the Chune of St. Columba.
The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want. Psalm 23 to God's praise. So Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
He mayst thee down to lie. He'll cast your dream.
[43:48] He leadeth near the quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restart again. Amid, O Lord, I'll make.
We hail the paths of righteousness. He for his own and say.
He may may may