

Tell them

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 0 0] We turn back with me this morning for a little while to the passage we read in Deuteronomy chapter 6, where God is giving directions to Moses that he is to pass on to the people of Israel, but also directions that he is to pass on to everyone, because they've been written in the Bible and the Bible has been preserved for us, particularly because God wants us to know what he said to Moses.

Now we're all interested at various levels in mysterious people or in famous people, and we have a great interest in finding out what they're like, and the press particularly maybe have that sometimes ghoulish interest in different people and finding out all about them.

But imagine this morning if you had been around at the same time as Moses, and you knew that Moses had been up in the mountain where he had met with God. When he was coming back down, I don't think there would be anyone here that wouldn't be interested in what God had to say, because God's not anybody. He's not just an ordinary person.

And even if we were cynical about who God was or about what God was like, we would be interested in what God had to say. What is he saying? What did he say, Moses? What does he want us to know?

We would have an interest in the message that God had brought, because Moses knew that the message from God wasn't just for him, it was for everybody. And so the same is true today really, because the message is meant for us as well.

[1 : 3 0] And if we're asking or if we're wondering what God is saying to us, then it's the same message that we have in the Bible. What he told Moses was relevant for Moses' people, and what he told Moses is relevant for us.

God wants us to know the same things. And there's three things, there's a lot of different things, but there's three things briefly that I want to say about what God wants us to know. And then we'll look at it in the context of the baptism as well.

And the first thing he wants us to know always, when God speaks from heaven, whether it's through Moses or through his own beloved son, Jesus, or whether it's through prophets or whoever, the message we have is in the Bible.

And the first thing he wants us to know, when he spoke to Moses, he said, Moses, when you go down from the mountain, tell them about me. Because he says in verse 1, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God.

Tell them, tell them that there is one God. That's what I want them to know. And God still wants us to know that, that he is one, and there is just one God. He is eternal, he is unchanging, time, age, science, technology, none of these things changes him.

[2 : 4 4] Now he's beyond our understanding at some levels. But he has revealed himself in the person of his own son, Jesus Christ. He's diverse as God. Yeah, he's one. But he is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

We don't understand, but we accept that that is who he is. He's a God who reveals himself as in control. A God who has chosen to love us. A God who works on our behalf.

A God who one day will judge every single one of us. God is one. He makes himself known. Not entirely. There's a lot of questions I'm sure you have.

A lot of difficulties each and every one of us have about God, but he reveals himself. And that message is unchanged. It might have been given to Moses a long time ago, on the mountain. People have fabled that story.

But it's history. And God has given it for us because he wants us to know about himself. Time hasn't changed him. Neither is sophistication or progress or science or technology or cynicism or unbelief.

[3 : 45] Or your own opinion doesn't actually change who God is and what God is. Whether you choose to believe in him or not. In one sense makes no difference at all to God because God is unchanging.

And God is. There's one God. There's one way to him. He speaks to us through his living word. He loves us in the most remarkable ways we'll see. But we have him revealed in his word.

History speaks about him. The lives of believers here. The lives of believers you know in other places. And the lives of believers through time. Confess and reveal that the Lord is one.

And that he's alive and well today. So he says first, tell them about me. But then he goes on to say, later on in the chapter, and I'm just kind of jumping about a bit from bit to bit in the chapter.

He then goes on to say, tell them about freedom. Tell them about me. And he says, tell them about freedom. See in verse 21 of the chapter, God says, when your children ask you, why do we do all these things?

[4 : 52] Why do we worship God? Why do we follow him? Then God says, well you're to tell them that once we were slaves in Egypt. And God, by his mighty power and strength, set us free.

And it was all about freedom. And he brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And he was to take them into the promised land. Steve Biko was a great character in South Africa.

At the time when apartheid was raging. And there's a book called Biko. By a guy called Donald Woods. Who was a journalist at the time. An anti-apartheid journalist.

And he was expelled from South Africa. And was allowed, once he was expelled. Or wasn't allowed, but he was free. To write the story of Steve Biko.

And it became a very famous film called Cry Freedom. Very moving. And a very challenging film. And there's something about a title like that. Cry Freedom. That meets people very strongly at the point of their need.

[5 : 54] There's something about the plight of being human. The plight of being people. That makes freedom a very exciting quest. And something that we long for. Roger Daltrey in the famous words of his song.

I'm free. Was a great anthem at the time it was written. Freedom is the pursuit that so much of our lives is taken up with. And we are in this quest all the time for freedom.

And we love the concept of freedom. And we strive for individual rights and freedoms. And democracy at all levels. And God says here.

And he doesn't change when he says. Tell them about freedom. See God is interested in the plight of his people. That's what comes across in this chapter.

He made them. And then he takes Moses. And he speaks to Moses personally. And he heard the cry of Moses people who were crying out in slavery in Egypt.

[6 : 52] Now to digress. There's mystery here. Because slavery and all the trouble. And the murder and the misery that they experienced as a people.

Was partly as a result of sin having come into the world. Now there's a mystery about that. I can't explain it. I can't explain why the devil is there.

But there is sin. And there is problems. And there is evil. And there is death. And it has meant that we have a broken relationship with God because of sin. That we are guilty before him. And that our death signifies.

And is a symptom of a terrible problem we have. Because of sin. But the message of God is. Freedom. Freedom from the slavery and the effects of sin.

He has come to set us free. God has a message about freedom. About spiritual freedom. Now in the Old Testament. Before Jesus came.

[7 : 59] Because it's Jesus who came. To die on the cross and to set us free. Before Jesus came. The spiritual reality of our being freed. Was made easier to understand for the Old Testament people.

By a physical release that they were given from slavery. They were physically enslaved in Egypt. They were oppressed. They were dying. And God came to set them free.

He let them come out of Egypt as a people. And there was all the trouble in the desert. And then they got into the promised land. The land where they had an inheritance. And which is part of the reason why there's all the killing just now in Jerusalem.

Because they can't see past that inheritance. They think that that inheritance is all that God gave them. But really that was in a sense just a picture of the spiritual freedom that God has come to deal with.

Not just for the Israelites. Or for the Egyptians. Or for the Chinese. Or for the Latin Americans. But also for every single human being.

[8 : 59] He has come to deal with the problem of our spiritual slavery. That we are all slaves to sin. And under the condemnation and sentence of death. And eternal death.

But Jesus has come to set us free. Tell them God says about freedom. Tell them about me. Tell them about freedom. You see the New Testament gives us the marvellous account of Christ on the cross.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead three days later. Of which we are coming up to remember at Easter time. But Jesus himself speaks about sin enslaving. Making us slaves.

Everyone he says who sins. Unpopular concept. Though it is today. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. And with that Old Testament picture.

We are reminded that God has come to set us free. From the slavery to sin. See what God says. Tell them about freedom. And God says the only true freedom for individuals.

[10 : 06] Is spiritual freedom. That our true freedom doesn't come in a sexual revolution. Or in taking drugs. Or in the freedom of choice. Or in the bill of rights.

Or in the control of censorship. Or of libertarianism. These things give social freedoms. These things give individual freedoms at a level.

But some of them don't. But God is saying tell them about true freedom. Tell them about real freedom. Spiritual freedom. Because the major problem that we face.

Is a heart problem. Is a spiritual problem. Is a relationship problem with God. And that we are condemned in our sins. Until Christ comes. To set us free.

Calvary. Calvary. The message of Calvary. Is not about a poor enslaved Jew. Who happened to be wrongly accused. And died on a cross.

[11 : 01] And later became a folk hero. It's the story of freedom. That Jesus Christ has come. To die on a cross. To pay the punishment for our sins. To pay the penalty.

That has enslaved us. And imprisoned us. And to offer us freedom. That is the message of the cross. That is the message of the gospel. And in Jesus Christ. We are free.

So that we can say. As Jesus said. So if the Son sets you free. That is Jesus. You will be free indeed. Those who are Christ's.

Who come to Jesus for forgiveness. No. Freedom. Inside. True freedom. Freedom. Freedom. Of having our sins paid.

And dealt with. Forgiven. Taken by Jesus Christ. And in that. Jesus gives us a new heart as well. Ezekiel says. I will give you. A new heart.

[11 : 56] And put a new spirit in you. I will remove your heart of stone. And give you a heart of flesh. You're sitting here. Maybe. And you think. What a lot of rubbish. And you know. Your heart is just like stone.

Spiritually. And you're. Rejecting. And you're called against the message. Well Jesus has come to set us free. From having that cynical. And disbelieving attitude. And to give us.

A new heart. A heart which believes. And recognizes. And hears the voice of God. Saying. Tell them about freedom. Tell them about myself. He says. Then he also says.

Tell them about freedom. And then he says. Tell them. About love. Isn't that great? You think God is a harsh. And oppressive. And a slave.

Or master. Like God. Who is out to give us a hard time. And suppress our enjoyment. And suppress our freedoms. But you know. The central message of the whole Bible.

[12 : 55] Is tell them about me. Tell them about freedom. And tell them about love. In verse 5 he says. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God. With all thy heart.

With all thy soul. And with all thy strength. You see. We are so misconceived. In so much of what we think about Jesus Christ. And what Jesus Christ is like.

And what God is like. We have so many misconceptions. Based on half truths. Or no truths. Or what the ponder next door told us. And we've never examined for ourselves. What God is about.

And what God says. And what God reveals about himself. We judge God on his followers. We judge God on the preachers. We judge God on the churches.

We look at the religious wars. And we look at the harsh rules. And we hear about the self-righteous bigots. And we think. Well that is God. I want nothing to do with that. But the message from God to Moses.

[13 : 48] And the same message that has come down through time. Is tell them about freedom. Tell them about love. That's the God that we have. And that's what he wants us to know. That God is love.

And that God wants us to love him wholeheartedly. And that that is why he sent Jesus. He wants a relationship with his people. A loving relationship.

That's what he is after. And it comes through Jesus Christ. He doesn't want a cold contract. He doesn't want legalism from us. Where we follow a set of rules.

In the hope that maybe we'll get to heaven on the last day. Because we've done our best. He wants us to love him. He wants us to recognize the freedom. That he offers us in Jesus.

He wants us to know that. He didn't leave us in our sin and our plight. But he sent his beloved son Jesus. To pay the price. And to take the cost. To set us free. He offers us free salvation.

[14 : 47] Meaning. Direction. Pardon. The release of the weight of the world's problems. Compassion. Power. Life. The unsearchable riches that he gives.

Security. Family. Relationship. These things that humanity is crying out for. And looking for in all kinds of different ways. He offers.

Through Jesus Christ. Through loving the Lord our God. We can't do that. Unless we've been given the new heart. The old heart of stone can't love him. Stone doesn't love.

It's cold. It's heavy. But the heart of flesh which he gives us. He gifts us life. That enables us to love him. And then we're asked to obey him.

Yes we're asked to obey him. But out of love. Out of gratitude. It's the kind of obedience that you see. A car restorer. Maybe someone who restores old cars.

[15 : 47] And they've got to follow a whole lot of very detailed plans. In order to restore that car properly. But it's no problem for them. It's a labour of love. They enjoy doing it.

And they know that the car will come out beautifully. It's no hassle for them to do. To follow these minute details in order. To see the car restored to its former glory. So as in Christ. We have no problem.

When we're close to Christ. And when our love is in Christ. To follow him. Because we know he loves us. We know the directions he gives us are for our good. That he doesn't lead us in any bad way. But it does require discipline.

And it requires a recognition. That he is Lord and Master. It's being faithful in a marriage. That we find that no great difficulty. If we are in love.

And if we love our partner. It's when we do what our parents say. Because we know they're after our good. And because they love us. Not because they're there. To beat us down. And give us a hard time. In love.

[16 : 42] In love. We see it. Following Christ in a completely different way. It's a pleasure. It's a privilege. Because of what he's done. We can never do enough back in return. And when we follow him and his ways.

Then there is a glorious life for us. If we don't love him though. We can't obey him. And we can't love him. Unless we've been given a new heart. Until we've listened.

To what he said. Tell them about me. Tell them. About freedom. Tell them. About love. Tell them. About the slavery.

That sin brings. The loneliness. The meaningless quest. For happiness. That we strive after. But ignore. The source of happiness himself.

God says. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And you shall be saved. You and your household. The promise. Is to you. And your children. When you come to Christ.

[17 : 39] What an effect it would have. On your children. On your family. On your circle of friends. When you come to Christ. You will be free. Free indeed.

Come to me. He says. All you who labour. And are heavy laden. And I will give you rest. For God so loved the world. That he gave his one and only son. That whoever believes in him. Shall not perish.

But have everlasting life. Tell them. About me. Tell them. About freedom. Tell them. About love. Amen. Now very briefly.

Just before we sing again. And the children from the Sunday school come in. We're about to have a baptism. Baptism. And this passage also speaks about baptism. Just say a few words here about baptism.

It's part of belonging to God. It's the important sign and symbol. That we have built. Fallen in with God. That we believe in Jesus.

[18 : 35] And the washing of water symbolises the washing away of our sins. And this chapter is all written in the language of covenant. The old testament language of covenant.

Which is followed through into the new testament. And God works in covenant. That is. In just the same way in a sense. A marriage is a covenant. Take vows. A covenant between two people.

So God works in covenant. When we come to Christ. We are in a covenant of grace. With him. But in the Bible. The family is always very very central. In the whole covenant concept.

The whole covenant idea. It's central to God's plan of salvation. And always in the Bible. The covenant. And the sign of the covenant. Was to be not only for believers.

But also for the family. Of believers when they were children. And the prayers of believing parents. And the work that they are to do. Is to seek.

[19 : 36] That the child that's baptised in faith. Will come themselves to a personal faith in Jesus. When they understand and recognise what that means. Baptism in and of itself doesn't do anybody any good.

In the sense you are not saved. You're not right with God. Just because you've been baptised as a child. But it's a very important. Part of God's work. Part of the covenant. And it shows.

That the children of believers. Are in a very privileged place. Where they are part of this covenant. And they have special responsibilities also. So I ask very briefly. If you're a child here today.

Who's grown up a bit. From when you were held. In your mum's and dad's arms there. If you've grown up. Maybe you've grown up to be a big boy. Or a big girl. Maybe you're even a big person. You're a grown up altogether now.

And you were baptised as a child. Can I ask you. Or can I say to you. First of all. You have a great privilege. To have been baptised. And brought up as. In a Christian home.

[20 : 35] Knowing about God. Knowing about Jesus. Hearing about the message. Coming to church. What a great privilege. The message of salvation. Has been given to you. From when you were in your mum's knee.

But with that. Is a great responsibility. Now that you're a big person. You have to come to your decision. About Jesus Christ. You have to. Follow. Jesus Christ for yourself.

You have to inherit. The blessings. You have to take hold of the promises. Your mum and dad's faith. Will not save you. You have to inherit them for yourself. And you need to.

Follow Jesus Christ. And make that decision for him. Because there's a much more solemn. And serious judgement. On those. Who have. Been given all the privileges. Who have been told about Jesus.

And who have chosen to reject that love. Who have chosen. That they don't want that freedom. So I can ask you to consider. As children. Bigger children.

[21 : 34] And grown ups. Who have been baptised. What you've done with this great privilege. But also parents. And very briefly. Parents. We have a great responsibility as well.

As we baptise our children. See in verse 7. We're told. When God has spoken. And he says. You shall teach diligently unto your children. You shall talk of them. When you sit. The house. And when you walk in the way.

When you lie down. And when you rise. This stuff. And it goes on to speak about the importance. Of always telling the children. Your children. About God. And about the gospel. And about Jesus. And the vows that we take.

That's the easy bit. Any of us can do that bit really. But we have a strong responsibility. As parents. We have to have strong convictions. And we have to have clear communications. With our children.

Because we have vowed to bring them up the Lord's way. You know later on we're told in that. We looked at it before in verse 20. And when thy son asketh thee in time to come. You see God knew about children.

[22 : 28] And he knew that they would ask questions. Why are we doing this? What's the point? Why do I go to church? Why do we read the Bible? All these things. Children ask them. But children you know. They're very inquisitive. But they'll only ask if they see you.

And if they never see you with a Bible in your hand. Or a Bible opened. If they never see you praying. Or reading the truth. If they never see you in church. If they never see you acting in a Christian way.

Then they'll never ask. And they'll only ask if they see. And so really. Children are a very good thermometer. To register how hot or cold we are in our love for Christ.

And if they have no interest in what we are. And what we do. And in God. And they never ask us anything about our faith. We have to ask the question. Well do they actually see it? Is there anything for them to ask about?

And they can be a good judge. A good thermometer for us. About how much we love the Lord. But even if they don't ask. We are to tell them. Instruct them. Teach them diligently.

[23 : 24] God says. It's disciplined work that we do. When we vow to bring up our children. It's beautiful. He's given us the family in order to do that. And the privilege of communication.

Between parents and children. It's a marvellous thing. And we're to let that whole way of doing things flourish in our family. He says. When you're in the house. When you're going for a walk.

And nowadays. When you're in your car. When you're having your supper at night. When you're having your breakfast in the morning. Speak to them about these things. Make it natural. Make it something that's everyday. Spend time with them.

Tell them about the Lord. Be interested. Listen. Share. Eat around the table. Not around the TV. So we have time. And we have the desire. And we have the interest to spend with our children.

The whole of our lives. God is saying. Is to be this great opportunity. Of telling them. About freedom. Telling them about love. Showing them that you're interested. Not just in spiritual things necessarily. But in everything that they are.

[24 : 18] See. It'll be no good for us. If we preach at our children. Or if we ram it all down their throats. At a predetermined time. Once a week. Well. Here's the religious spot. Ram. Down their throat it goes. And they learn to resent that.

Because they'll know we have little time for them. The rest of the week. It must be in the context. Of a loving. Compassionate. Caring. Relationship of laughter.

And friendship. And time. And commitment. That we listen to them. When they tell us about school. And when they tell us what they're doing. And about their pals. And about all these things. And in that whole environment.

Of talking together. That we tell them. About freedom. And we tell them. About love. And we tell them about God. And it just comes naturally. Supper time.

Breakfast time. Walking along the street. In the car. In the home. But to do that. We need Christ. And we take our children. To be baptised. In recognition.

[25 : 13] That we need Christ. Ourselves. And we need Christ. To help us. To bring up our children. And that is what. We'll be doing. After we've sung the next psalm.

So as. Maybe Hugh. If you'll go. During the singing of the psalm. To bring in the children. And if. Jimmy and Rosemary. Come down. During the singing of the psalm 103.

We'll continue singing. In psalm 103. Where we sung before the sermon. And this time. We'll sing from verse 13. Psalm 103.

From verse 13. And we'll just carry on singing. Until everyone's. Sitting. In their. Right place. Psalm 103.

From verse 13. Such pity as a father hath. Unto his children dear. Like pity shows the Lord. To such as worship him in fear. For he remembers we are dust. And he our frame well knows.

[26 : 10] Frail man. His days are like the grass. As flower and field that grows. We're going to sing to the tune. Ayrshire. And we'll sing from verse 13. On.