

## **Good News #4 - Will We Be Married in Heaven With Our Pets and Babies**

- All right, the whole globe's freaking out, everybody's scared, they've learned two things, number one, they're not in control, if you're a Christian, you knew that in advance, that was really not a shocking surprise ending. Number two, everyone has realized that they are mortal, and at some point they will in fact die, and here's the big idea Jesus beats death, there's nothing to fear, if you know Jesus Christ to live is Christ to die is gain, to depart is far better than quarantine, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, and freaking out okay. So here's the big idea of the Good News sermon series, everybody's getting bad news, just turn your phone off, it's all bad news that's all that it is, open your Bible, that's where the good news is, your soul needs some hope, it needs a future, it needs to know that the worst problems you face have already been dealt with by someone that loves you. And here's why people are so freaked out, especially regarding death, because if all you think is this life is all you've got, if you don't reconcile all your relationships, if you don't check off your bucket list, if you don't accomplish all of your objectives, then it is absolutely devastating. And let me say this, none of us will finish everything we've started, none of us will perfectly reconcile with everyone we know, and none of us will complete all the things that we have initiated. For all of us, the question is what happens on the other side of this life? Good news, I know a guy who went there came back told us, waits for us, prepares a place for us, His name is?

- Jesus.

- His name is Jesus. So we're talking about Good News, and we're talking about getting rid of the greatest fear that has gripped the entire planet. I mean, it's just freaking death, it's not a thing, Jesus already took care of that, I worship a dead guy who's alive, and guarantees that if I follow Him, though I die I too shall live. It takes the sting out of death, it takes the fear out of forever, and I'm not saying that what we're now dealing with isn't a big deal, but it's not that big of a deal, there's a bigger deal and His name is Jesus. So as I'm talking about heaven, all these questions come up on social media, 'cause everybody thinks, "Okay, if I go to heaven, "that sounds good, but do I get to bring my wife? "Do we get to bring our pet, will our baby be there? "So I'm gonna answer these three weird questions, "'cause we got nothing else to do." And I wanna answer these three weird questions, we'll deal with first and foremost your pet, how many of you have a pet, love your pet? Love your pet? Will they be in heaven?

- [Congregation] Yes, no.

- Yes and no, okay, so we're divided okay. Okay, let's see, will our pets be in the kingdom of heaven? and here's the question. Now let me start by connecting this to Jesus okay, because Jesus and pets, there's a leap over the Grand Canyon right there okay, so Jesus and pets, Jesus is the what of the tribe of Judah?

- A lion.

- Lion He is the what of God?

- Lamb.

- Lamb. He comes back riding a white?

- Horse.

- Horse. So there's Jesus and pets, I connected it for you okay, now it's Christian. How many of you feel that was a lame connection? Just be honest it's fine. Let me just say this, it's a pandemic, lower your expectations. And most people are at home, going to church in their pajamas, there's a guy right now at church, in his underwear, on his couch. So I'm doing good, I put pants on, and at least I add a few points okay. So just give me a little credit for what I'm trying to do here okay. And so Jesus, Jesus uses these analogies, let me see if I could do a little better, so back in Genesis, there's a guy named Noah, there's a big flood, he builds a big boat, who goes on the boat with Noah? Family and animals, all the kids got to bring their pets. So, and what God does is He spares not only the human life, but the animal life, because He loves both. At the end, when the flood recedes, and they exit in Genesis nine, there's something called the Noahic Covenant, where God makes a promise, to never flood the earth again, and to bless those who are on it and in it, and here's exactly what it says, I'll give you a line from Genesis nine, "Every living creature that is with you, "the birds, the livestock, and the beasts of the fields." So what God says is, I'll make a covenant, not just with the people, but also with the animals, I've delivered human beings and animal life from death, and have a future for them, to bless them. So all of that to say that we have dominion, and the animals under us, can be blessed if in fact, God blesses us. Now, here's what we learn in Isaiah 11, animals will be in heaven, now, I'm not putting your pet there yet, we'll deal with that in a minute. Isaiah 11, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, "the leopard shall lie down with the young goat." I mean usually these are the animals, that treat the other animals like the free samples at Costco, they just eat them. And that is not happening here, "And the calf, and the lion, and the fattened calf together, "and a child shall lead them." Let me just say this, if you let your kid play with a wolf or a leopard, you're a really bad parent. "The cow and the bear shall graze "their young shall lie down together, "the lions shall eat straw like an ox, "the nursing child shall play over the hole of a cobra, "and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adders den." What it's talking about here in heaven, is that there will be animals, and that the relationship between human beings and animals, will be as God intended when He created the world. Our God said He made us, and then He made animals, and He gave us dominion over the animals. Now that sin has entered the world, we have wild animals and domestic animals, wild Animals a little scary, domestic animals those are our pets. It seems like in the kingdom of God, all we get are the domesticated animals, because of our dominion, all animals are domesticated, there's no longer fear. And I don't know since moving to Arizona, I've realized that everything here is trying to kill me, that's what I've realized, I've seen at my house a rattlesnake, a javelina that smells like satan's foot. I have seen, I've seen a bobcat in the front yard of my house, and we've got wolves

running all over the property, and there's bunny rabbits in our neighborhood, and let me just say they're not getting along very well. That being said, when the kingdom of God comes, the full harmony of creation, and the full dominion of mankind happens, how awesome would it be, if all animals were domesticated, those of you who love throwing a Frisbee, and watching your dog chase it? Wouldn't it be awesome if you could do that, with a leopard, if you could do that with a lion, right? If you could just call, and that animals would treat you like your pets treat you okay. So the point is that there will be animals in heaven, 'cause heaven is where ultimately the kingdom of God, and this world come together, are fully reunited, reconciled, rejoined, and everything is perfect together forever. So there are, I've got four options, number one, there will be animals in heaven, there will be new, this could be one of four possibilities, new animals of the same kind in the kingdom of God. So there may be the same animals, that we have, same kinds of animals in the kingdom of God. Number two, it could be that just like we come back to live forever, God could bring animals back to live forever, and so not only would there be animals of the same kind, there might be the same animals. Number three, it is possible that extinct animals will come back to life. I had a guy asked me this week, he's like, can we do Jurassic Park? I was like, I don't know, that's a good question, but it is possible that extinct animals come back. Or number four that God could make new kinds of animals, that we've not even seen yet. This doesn't answer the question of whether or not your pet will be there, I know you love your pet, your pet loves you. And so some of you probably have specific questions, so since we've just got a moment, just tell me what kind of pet you have, and I'll tell you if they're going to heaven or hell, let's just do this for a moment, does anyone have a pet that they wanna know if they're going to heaven or hell raise a hand, feel free? Yes, what do you have?

- A cat.

- A cat. There's no chance at all. There's just no chance, what's your cat's name? You have two, what are their names? Willow and Coco, goodbye Willow, goodbye Coco. See, because what happens in heaven, now it says, "The lion will lie down with a lamb." So big cats yes, little cats no, that's what it means in the Hebrew. And now, what it's talking about here is that in heaven, all the animals worship God, would a cat ever worship God? No, because they think they are God, and they expect to be worshiped, so cats ultimately are idolaters there's no hope for them. Anyone else have a pet, that you'd like to know if they're going to heaven or hell, anybody else, anybody else? Okay, sir what do you got?

- A dog.

- You got a dog? Okay, what kind of dog?

- Chihuahua.

- What?

- Chihuahua.

- A chihuahua, that's not a dog. That's not a dog, that's a feather duster without the handle, that's what a chihuahua is. I don't probably not, I hate to tell you, probably not. I can't, I see no need for a chihuahua, I just don't. I mean I could go either way, it is a dog so there's more hope than there is for the cat. Who else has a pet that they wanna know if it's going to heaven or hell? Anybody else, anybody else got a pet? What do you got Chloe?

- A bunny.

- A bunny? Of course a bunny is going to heaven. They're connected with Easter, which is the resurrection of Jesus, we all know that they produce magical eggs, of course bunnies will be in heaven. They're nice, they're furry, they never hurt anybody, everybody loves a bunny Amen, and if you don't, you're a horrible person. What other kind of pets do you guys have yes?

- A Golden Retriever.

- A Golden Retriever. For sure they'll be in heaven. They that is a sanctified dog, they're only nice, their tail always wags, they chase the Frisbee, they're not like a Doberman Pinscher, so yes, Golden Retriever will be for sure in heaven, Amen. Right, I mean, right?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- I think it was Will Rogers who said, "If dogs don't go to heaven, I wanna go over where they go." That's especially true of a Golden Retriever. We don't have a Golden Retriever, we have a German Shepherd, and I'm not sure, pray for the German Shepherd, could go either way for the German Shepherd. Our German Shepherd, we bought her when we had a safety issue, and she would roam the property, now she just lays in the house and all she does is sheds, and so you know, I'm not sure that shedding dogs will be in heaven 'cause that would be hell for me. Who else has a pet that they wanna know if they're going to heaven or hell? Who anybody else, we got nothing else to do, and everybody online is got nothing to do, so we can go out to dinner movie, yeah?

- [Congregant] Bulldog.

- A Bulldog, yeah they're gonna go to heaven, 'cause they're tough, because a bulldog yes, what do you guys think about a turtle? Yeah they're gonna be ninjas duh, we all know that. So I can't guarantee that your pet is going to heaven, but I can promise that there will be animals in the kingdom of God, okay that we do know. And here's what we do know as well, animals will praise God in heaven, this is crazy. How many of you, you got kids, and your kids watch those movies, where the animals talk and sing? That might be a little sneak preview of forever? Okay read this with me Psalm 148:10-13, "Beasts and livestock, creeping things "and flying birds, kings of the earth, "all peoples, princes, and all rulers of the earth. "Young men and maidens together, old men and children, "let them praise the name of the Lord, "for His name is alone

exalted. "His Majesty is above earth and heaven." When all is said and done, and Jesus comes back, and the unseen, and the seen realms are reunited, and God's children are resurrected, and the curse is lifted, and creation is restored. And then there are human beings, and angelic beings, and animal beings, all together as a great chorus, singing the praises of God like one big, amazing forever choir. I mean, it's beyond, it's what the Bible says that, that we can't even conceive of the good things that God has in store for us. And what it's talking about here is that there is human life, and there is plant life, and then in the middle is animal life. We have dominion over the animals, and then the animals are living beings, they don't have a soul in the same way that we do, but they are different than plants, they can communicate, they can have relationship, they can obey, they can learn. And so what we see in the resurrected state in eternity, somehow even the animals, and maybe your pets, will be present there praising God together forever. So let me just say this we live in the shadow lands, and a lot of what we long for, and dream about, and hope for, is actually what heaven is going to be like. So I've made a list and let's see, let's see if you can get most of it, think of all the talking, singing animal movies that you know, just name them. "Narnia," what else? "Angie."

- "Madagascar."

- "Madagascar," "Lion King."

- "Mr. Ed."

- "Mr. Ed." "Dr. Doolittle"

- "Yogi Bear."

- "Yogi Bear."

- "Marmaduke" "Garfield." See we have all of these concepts , I've got a whole list, "Lion King," "Garfield," "Dr.Dolittle," "Babe," "Jungle Boot," "Paddington," Paddington is gonna be in heaven for sure. "Scooby-Doo," "Stuart Little," "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," "Yogi Bear" "Alvin and the Chipmunks" "Antz" "Bambi" "Nemo" "Dory," "A Bug's Life" "Charlotte's Web" "Chicken Little" "Curious George" "Ice Age" "Mickey Mouse" "Kung Fu Panda" "Marmaduke" "Dumbo" "Nemo" "Narnia," and of course all dogs go to heaven. Now that being said, it seems like what even children's imaginations, use as the most interesting concept, and that is that there would be animals, that would be domesticated, that could communicate, and they could join us in some sort of communicative relationship, may actually be a longing from the eternal home, that God has prepared for us, where we together with our animals will praise God forever. Can you imagine how crazy church is gonna be in heaven? Not only will you bring your pet, your pet will be in the band, that's crazy, that's amazing, that's amazing, and that is the imagery that we see for eternity. So people ask, because if you're looking forward to going to heaven, the question is, "Well I like my pet, can my pet go?" "I like my spouse, can my spouse go? And then we have kids, do our kids go? So let me deal with the second question, and this is the one that gets

asked a lot, it flooded my inbox, it's all over social media, will we be married in the kingdom of heaven? And let me just point this out to the one guy, there was one comment, we had to block, and it was, what are you most looking forward to in heaven? And he said, "Not being married." If you're that guy watching it, you're gonna have an eternal couch in the kingdom of God, and that's where you'll be sleeping together forever. This is really, this is telling, if not being married in heaven sounds like Praise God, you probably got some stuff to work on. If you really do love your spouse, and you're thinking of going to heaven, what is the thought of going to heaven without your spouse? It's devastating, it's devastating. So people ask this question, am I going to be or are we going to be married in heaven? Now, first of all, let me give the argument for, then the argument against. The argument for, actually the most popular argument for marriage in heaven comes from a cult called Mormonism. And the cult of Mormonism says that men become gods, they get their own planet, they're polygamous with multiple wives, who are pregnant forever to inhabit the planet. For a fact, this is a religion that some dude made up, no woman made this up, 'cause for the dude it's like, you get a harem, and they're pregnant forever, and you're the god of your planet. The lady's like, what do I get? Pregnancy, that is not a fair deal. So what Mormonism teaches is that you are married forever, and you are polygamous, and you keep having children, and you populate your planet forever. That's not what the Bible says, some who do believe the Bible would make the argument this way, in Genesis one and two, everything was very good, God made the man, and He said it was not good for him to be what, alone. So question, in Genesis one and two, did Adam have a perfect relationship with God? Yeah, did he live in a perfect environment? Yes, yet it wasn't good for him to be alone, it wasn't good for him to be alone. Because God is one the Father, Son, and Spirit, the Trinitarian God of the Bible is one. And so for Adam, he had God above him, he had creation beneath him, but he didn't have an equal alongside of him, that together they could be one, and reflect the nature of the Trinitarian God of the Bible. Some would argue that Genesis one and two, is how God intended the world to be. Genesis three has ruined everything with sin, and when Jesus comes back, He picks up where Genesis one and two leaves off, and He continues with His original design plan. So they would say in heaven, just because you have a perfect relationship with God, and you're a perfect person, in a perfect place, doesn't mean that it's okay for you to be alone, that, that was how God designed you was for marriage. Now, those who would argue against marriage in heaven, marriage in heaven, and I know that for some of you, you're like, "Will, I be with my spouse?" We have some older saints in our church family too, and usually one passes before the other, and the question is, What will our relationship be on the other side? What will our relationship be on the other side? Those who would make the argument against, one of them is very practical, let's say you're married forever, be fruitful, and multiply, you have kids forever, and there is no death rate, do you think at some point, there could be a population issue? Probably, if you keep having kids forever, and ever, and ever, and everyone else does, even if we do Star Trek, and explore new galaxies at some point, we start filling up all the planets. In addition, some would say that when we get to heaven, our relationships with one another and God, are so perfect that it meets all of our deep relational longings, that ultimately our relational needs are met. In addition, some would say that marriage is a sign, pointing to the greater relationship of God and His people. It's what Paul says in Ephesians five, "That a husband should love his wife, "as Christ loves the Church." It says in

Revelation 19, when Jesus returns, there will be the quote, "Wedding supper of the Lamb," and Jesus and His people will be like, a bride and a groom throwing a party, and enjoying their relationship together forever. So some would say, "Just like when you're driving "on the road, this sign says take a left, "this sign says take a right, this sign says exit here." Once you arrive at your destination, you don't need the signs anymore. The whole point of the sign was to get you to the destination, they would say that marriage was a sign to get us to Jesus, and once we get to that eternal, heavenly home, and perfect relationship, we don't need the signs anymore. And there are two primary texts of Scripture that, they really address this, and let me say this, even if we're not married in heaven, are you still gonna be friends? Say yes, your spouse wants to say yes, say yes, you'll still know each other, you'll still love each other, you'll have a relationship. But these are the two texts that indicate that the marriage relationship as we know it, doesn't just come to an end, but it has some other manifestation, on the other side of this life. Romans 7:2 the Apostle Paul says, "A married woman is bound by law to her husband," while he what? "While he lives." So marriage is for people who are both alive, "But if her husband dies," he passes away first. "She is released from the law of marriage." That's what Paul's saying, marriage is for this life, if your spouse should pass, you are no longer bound to that relationship, which would open the possibility if you wanna remarry you can, you don't have to but you can. And again this pastorally is a big issue, because I know a lot of people that as I said, are older saints, and there's someone that they loved, and they spent years together. One of my dear friends recently celebrated 51 years of faithful marriage, they love each other, but he's struggling with some health issues, and if the early indicators are correct, he'll go home to be with the Lord before she does. And then the question is for them, if they've been together since junior high, loving each other, holding hands, and making memories for 51 years, what will it be like when they're together forever on the other side? This is the question that gets posed to Jesus, and it's from a group who are trying to trick Him. What these are, these are religious leaders who think that they're very smart, and they wanna get Jesus with one of those gotcha questions. They're like a bad journalist, they've got this set up, and they're looking for an outcome. And what they're doing here is they're crafting sort of this impossible argument, to try and get Jesus to answer in such a way, that will remove Him from authority and power, and then replace Him with their authority and power. So Matthew 22:23-33, "Sadducees," this is a theological group, this is a team, this would be like a political party or an ideological movement in our day, "The Sadducees came to Him, "who say that there is no resurrection." So we're talking about heaven, the kingdom of God, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life. "And they asked Him this question, ""Teacher, Moses said,"" so they're quoting the Old Testament. But again, remember, these are people who say, "There's no resurrection." And just think about this, let me say this, if there's no resurrection, there's no hope, if there's no resurrection there's no hope. This is why atheism leads up to ultimately despair and suicide. This is why people who don't believe that there is life after death, find death dominating this life. If you don't believe in the resurrection of the dead, you can't believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If all you believe is that, this life is all you've got, then ultimately this life is woefully disappointing. If you believe that this life is an internship for a better life, then there is much to look forward to, and there's nothing to be afraid of. There was a whole movement of people who denied the resurrection. You need to know that this same ideological category dominates our news, it dominates our social media, it dominates

our policymaking, and I do believe that we should alleviate human suffering, but I believe that the greatest human suffering, is eternal suffering. And I believe the most important way that we can ultimately love people, is to introduce them to Jesus, who defeats death and gives eternal life. And so Jesus is here teaching about the resurrection, before He goes to death, and before He rises from death, and they wanna argue with Him about resurrection. What is at stake here is not just a theological issue, but the hope of all humanity, what's at stake here is the hope of all humanity. There is no resurrection, and they have a question for Him, "Teacher Moses said," so they quote the Old Testament. "If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow, and raise up offspring for his brother." So in the Old Testament, husband dies, brother steps in loves the woman takes care of her, she's still part of the family and cared for. "Now there were," how many? "Seven brothers," this is a setup, there was a team, a club, a committee somewhere with a clipboard, and they're like, "Let's do four." "No, let's do five, seven." So they put together the craziest scenario they could think of. So hypothetically, there was a guy with seven brothers. "Seven brothers, the first married and died, and having no offspring, then the next brother married the wife. So too the second, and third brothers died, down to the seventh." So seven brothers died, and each one was married at some point to the same woman, to the same woman. Don't you feel sad for that girl? What a love life, but this is probably a hypothetical situation. "And them all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore of the seven, whose wife will she be?" Do you see the trick question? "Jesus answered them, You're wrong." So Jesus is not a philosophy professor at a community college, He believes in right and wrong, He believes in truth and lies, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God, for in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, three generations. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living' when the crowd heard this, they were astonished at His teaching." Those who would say that this doesn't refer to our current marriages continuing in heaven, would point to this phrase, where it says they were, "They will either marry or given in marriage." That's the Bible's language for marriage in this life. Those who would look at this and say, this doesn't negate the possibility of our current marriages continuing in heaven, what it does mean is there won't be new marriages in heaven, new marriages in heaven. The majority of scholars would say, that just as angels do not get married, they are living beings, that have loving relationships, but they don't get married as we do in that sacred covenant, that gets consummated, so too human beings resurrected, we will still have our physical bodies, we'll be anatomically male and female, but our relationship will not be continuous as marriage, though it will be loving, and devoted, and deep, that'd be the argument. What I do not know for sure is whether or not we'll be married in heaven, I'll just tell you quite frankly, how many of you this bothers you? This bothers me, you know why? I like my wife, no, I like really like her, I really like her, I can't imagine forever without Grace. But if we're friends, and we love each other, and we hang out, and our relationship is deeper than it is right now, then I just need to trust God that the relationship that we have will not only be satisfying, but it will exceed the intimacy that we enjoy today. I'll give you an example, some years ago, I knew a guy, he was married, and he and his wife, they had a complicated, conflicted marriage. I mean, they were the kind of couple they love Jesus, they loved each other, but if they were in a



boat, he would be rowing this way, and she would be rowing this way, they just, they never really got anywhere, they were always just sort of fighting against each other. And they did love each other, and they were faithful to one another. But they were also very frustrated with one another, and if you're single, just so you know, that's what happens. Okay, and so what happened is his wife passed away, and I'll never forget, I got to preach at the funeral, and I went to comfort him, and grieve with him afterward, and just sort of encourage him, he loved her very much. And I said, "How are you doing?" And he said, "I really miss her." He said, "But here's what I'm really excited about, "She knew Jesus, I know Jesus." He said, "We loved each other, "but we really had a complicated relationship." He said, "The next time I see her," and he said, "We're gonna have a perfect relationship." He said, "We're not gonna fight anymore, "we're not gonna pick at each other, "we're not gonna criticize with each other, "we're not gonna argue with each other, "we're not gonna be disappointed in each other, "we're not gonna be frustrated with each other." He said, "I don't know what it's gonna be like," he said, "I just know next time I see her, "our relationship is gonna be perfect." Is that true? See, that's the hope, for those who don't think that there's anything beyond this life, unless you reconcile every relationship, it's devastating. Unless you complete every assignment, it's devastating. Unless you check everything off your bucket list, it's devastating. If you know Jesus Christ, it's not devastating, you pick up where you left off, you complete the things you started, and you perfect the relationships you had, that's the hope for the believer. And the third question, so we started with pets kinda funny, at least I thought so, maybe not the cat lady, but you know I thought it was funny. So then we talked about marriage, here's the hard one, and I wanna address this as a father and as a pastor, how many of you are looking forward to heaven? Or you've lost a child, and you wonder if they'll be there with you? Grace and I had a miscarriage, well, Grace did, some years ago, we've got five kids, we should have six. We had a couple of kids, and then she got pregnant, we were really excited 'cause we love kids absolutely, my family 100% loves kids, we didn't accidentally have five. And then she got pregnant again, and then she miscarried, and it was devastating for all of us. And it feels like somebody's been missing in our family, it's what it feels like. We don't know if it was a boy or a girl, just something in my sense, I think it was a boy, that's just my sense. And in ministry, I've had this conversation literally hundreds of times. I talked to a medical doctor some years ago, and he said, "Yeah, upwards of 20% of pregnancies "end in miscarriage, but oftentimes "it's so early in the pregnancy, "that the woman does not know." So this is a very real issue. We recently had Mother's Day, for Mother's Day, it's hard for some women. Like I'd love to be a mom, but, and I've tried, but somehow life doesn't result. The most, one of the most devastating counseling sessions, I ever had as a young pastor, a couple came in, they love Jesus, they loved each other, godly people, and actually served together in kids ministry, they were awesome with kids, and you can tell they're gonna be amazing parents, but they didn't have any kids. And they came in and they're like, "Pastor Mark, we wanna talk." and I was like, "Okay." So and then they came in, they loved each other, they were very affectionate, they love Jesus, we prayed together, they were smiling, I look up, and now their faces change. And he's like, my wife's got a question for you? And she said, she said, "We just miscarried our 20th child." And she's crying, she says, "I need to know where the babies are?" I just start crying, 20 miscarriages. The most haunting funeral I've ever preached, I was in my mid 20s, I was a young, senior pastor, it was actually someone that I knew, they got married, and they got pregnant with twin boys, and they

were so excited, and so then the one boy is born, and the other is stillborn, and they asked me to preach at the funeral, and the coffin is tiny. And I see the mom in the front row holding the one boy, and there's his brother. The reason I want to address this issue is because for some people, this is the great question that they have about heaven and the kingdom of God. And let me say this as well, this will be very offensive, it is not political, it is pastoral, I am freaking sick of hearing people, who keep abortion clinics open, talking about the sanctity of life, and that every life matters. If we're going to value human life, let's value all human life, not just those who can vote. That if we're going to be pro-life, and all of a sudden the whole planet, is hypocritically pro-life right? Babies, well, their lives don't matter, but living people, we need to shut down the universe to save one life. The most dangerous place to live today, is not in a retirement home, and it's not in a hospital, it's in a mother's womb. The leading cause of death in America is not COVID, it is abortion. And then the question becomes, what happens to all those kids? If we believe that this is a pandemic, I'm telling you that there is a holocaust, that it's far superseding the pandemic. And I just cannot stomach another liberal, godless, murderous governor, telling us how valuable human life is, I can't stomach it anymore. That ultimately we believe that people are made in the image and likeness of God, and they have dignity, value, and worth, in the sight of God from the womb. And that if we care about life, we should care about all life, and life begins at conception okay. And so not only does this apply to miscarriage, this also applies to stillborn, this also applies to children who are born, and then don't live long, and this also includes abortion. And I know this is a bit of a complicated subject, and we're supposed to be having an encouraging day, but I think that this will greatly encourage you. Here are the options, six options, number one, all babies are sinners and go to hell, how many of you don't vote for that position? Amen, you're like, "Yeah it doesn't feel right." And, but you'd have to be a really cruel, cold-hearted person to go there. Number two, all babies are elect by God and go to heaven. Number three, God chooses some babies for heaven but not all. Number four, all babies are innocent, until they reach the age of accountability. Number five, all babies baptized into a covenant family go to heaven. And number six, God decides who goes to heaven and hell. How many of you have heard this age of accountability? that children are basically innocent until a certain age, and then they are morally responsible, before that they are not. There are some places in Isaiah and Jonah, that seem to infer that as kids grow, they get more moral reasoning, I'm not gonna get into all the details, I wrote seven days of daily devotions, you can sign up for them for free, I'll give them to you gladly. It's about five and a half thousand words, and I get into this really deeply starting tomorrow. But the point is that an age of accountability, is something that people don't agree on the age of, and the Bible does not speak to in my opinion. I don't believe that at age 12 or 13, which is where most people put the line, that you're not a moral cognizant being until junior high. How many of you have little kids that know right and wrong, and they actually know Jesus? Paul says of a man named Timothy, "You have known the Scriptures from infancy, "that have made you wise unto salvation." The word there in the Greek, the original text is from a really little baby, like still being held by mom. It is possible for a little child to know Jesus, my kids, quite frankly, our kids, they all knew Jesus at a young age. They prayed to Him, they loved Him, most of them were baptized before kindergarten or first or second grade. My kids grow up knowing, and loving, and serving Jesus. It wasn't just at one point, that their moral reasoning or capacity was like a switch, that went from off to on. The

moral compass in conscience of a child, is more like a dimmer switch, the more they learn, and the longer they live, the more illumination and insight they have. So I don't believe in an age of accountability. In addition, some would say, if they're baptized into a covenant family, they go to heaven. And the thought there is, that ultimately the parent is very concerned that the child will go to heaven, so they want to do something to predestine the child. There's a concept in the Bible called predestination, we're gonna get into Romans here in September, push that sermon series out, predestination does come there. The point is that somebody is trying to choose the destiny of someone else, and what parents do who love their kids, they try to predestine their kids. How can I get them into heaven? I'll get them wet, and God likes wet people, so obviously He'll take them to heaven. Now baptism literally means to plunge, dip or immerse, do you know why we do not do that to children? It's abusive, that's why so we sprinkle them. And the early church started baptizing infants to give parents some assurance that their child, their baby, their little one would go to heaven, yet it is not baptism that saves, it is Jesus who saves. And that ultimately, Jesus pattern of baptism is that He was baptized as an adult, not as a baby. And so I don't see the baptism of children anywhere in the entire Bible, I see children, but not babies, not really little ones. So the question is, well, how do you get your baby to heaven? Here's the point, you don't get anybody to heaven, Jesus does, you don't get yourself to heaven, how do you think you can get your baby to heaven? Jesus can get you to heaven, and He can get them to heaven. Let me share this with you, next slide please, three reasons for hope from the Bible, Psalm 51:5, "For I was born a sinner, yes, "from the moment my mother conceived me." The problem is that we are sinners not just by behavior, but by nature, by nature. We inherit a sin nature from Adam, think of it similarly to a genetic defect. We inherit genetic traits from our ancestors, sin is like a genetic defect, that we inherit from our father Adam, and it is part of our nature before we are born, because sin is not just what we do, it is part of who we are. What this means is, if we are sinners from the womb, then we are separated from God from the womb okay. Now, somebody is saying I thought this was the three reasons for hope? Okay, there's hope, here's the next verse. "God knows us intimately, "and is involved with us from our mother's womb." How many of you mothers have been pregnant, and you can just sense that somehow God is present in a supernatural, significant, and wonderful way, in the life that is being formed in your womb? Any of you ladies experience that? There's something supernatural and special. God is involved in the formation of human life in the womb, "You made the delicate inner parts of my body." I love how this translation says it. "And knit me together in my mother's womb." That means that human life is handcrafted, "Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex." Some translations say I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. Your workmanship is marvelous how well I know it. You watched me before ultrasounds, have you ever seen an ultrasound, it's amazing, isn't it? And you're like there's the baby, 10 fingers, 10 toes, there's the baby, long before ultrasound there was God, who saw life our in the womb. When we get to see through an ultrasound, we get to see what God has always seen, I mean, it's amazing. "You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, "as I was woven together in the dark of the womb." You saw me when? Before I was born, before I was born. I love the fact that God sees the baby, that God knows the baby, that God loves the baby, that God saves the baby before they're born. How many of you love that? This is the precious sanctity of human life, this is someone made in the image and likeness of God. I mean, while we've been closed, I'll share

with you after the sermon, what we've been working on, the thing that we're working on most is the backyard and kids space, you know why? Because God handcrafts environments, so that children can be loved, and blessed, and live. And we need to be about handcrafting environments, where children can be loved, and blessed, and live, and that's your home as well. God can and does save people from their mother's womb, this is unbelievably encouraging. "You are He who took me," Psalm 22:9-10. "Out of the womb, "You made me trust well on my mother's breast, "I was cast upon You from birth," from when? "From the womb." Now, there is this controversial doctrine of election, predestination, foreknowing, and fore-choosing, for me, I love it. 'Cause God's like, "I love that kid, "I love that kid, I love that kid, I love that kid." The question is what did they do? Nothing, I just love 'em. Well, they're sinners, yeah, but I love 'em. Well, they didn't even get to prove their worth, yeah, I just love 'em. That God starts with love, God starts with grace, God starts with relationship with children, from the womb. How many of you have found that even when your kids are born, sometimes they are innately spiritual in a way that adults are not? I've found that teaching kids to pray, is as easy as teaching kids to talk. I've found that kids believe in the existence of God, far easier than oftentimes their parents do. And kids will pray trusting God to hear and act, in ways that their parents don't demonstrate the same level of faith. And what he says here is that God knew him from his mother's womb, and God saved him from his mother's womb. To me, this is extraordinarily encouraging, Isaiah says the same thing, that he was called in set apart for prophetic ministry from the womb. Jeremiah says the same thing that he was set apart, and called to prophetic ministry from the womb. And then let me give you one that just absolutely is maybe my favorite, there's a guy named John the Baptizer, he is Jesus' cousin, Jesus' mother, and John's mother, John's mother is Elizabeth, Jesus' mother is Mary, it says in Luke's gospel, that they came together, they're both pregnant, right, Old Covenant, New Covenant, prophet fulfillment, here it all is in the womb of these two women. And it says that John the Baptizer, for those of you that know the story, that he was filled with the Holy Spirit, from his mother's womb, and he leaped for joy worshiping Jesus. Ladies, let me tell you this, I didn't even think of it until right now, I could still remember when Grace was pregnant with the five kids, I thought she was so cute, and she'd be like, "Oh my gosh, put your hand here, "what do you feel then?" The baby's kicking, you know what the baby is doing? Maybe worshiping, maybe filled with the Holy Spirit, worshiping, worshiping. That's what John the Baptist experienced, he was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, he was present near Jesus, and it says that, "The baby leapt in her womb." She's like, "Oh my gosh, he's worshiping his Savior." This is the hope of the believer. Now, what happens is when we think of eternity, all we see is death, we need to see beyond death. We need to see, I'm gonna be there, my spouse and I love Jesus, we're gonna be there, and our kids can be there, and even the kids that didn't make it to adulthood tragically, they could be there too, that eternity could be the greatest family reunion you've ever seen. And for me this week pastorally, this really hits close to home, one of my dear friends and brothers, that I've known for a few decades, he died recently, and he left his wife and four kids. He's about my age, his kids are about the age of our kids. And they're gonna have the funeral, and I don't think I'd get on a plane, and to go pay regards to my dear friend. And I would be without hope, but here's what I know, he loved Jesus, his wife loves Jesus, their four kids love Jesus, so what awaits them on the other side? Perfect relationships, perfect family, perfect joy, together forever. And even if

they miscarried a child, there is the possibility that they're gonna meet the one they never met. This is the hope of the children of God, and what it does, it takes the sting out of the end of this life, and it provides hope for what lies on the other side of this life. I give you a few more, three reasons for hope from Jesus, Jesus became a baby in His mother's womb, we often say God became a man, well, before He was a man, He was a baby. Jesus identifies with the unborn, He identifies with little kids. Our God knows exactly what it's like to be in the womb, He knows exactly what it's like to be born, He knows exactly what it's like to grow in wisdom, stature, and favor with men and God. That means that everyone from the womb to adulthood, every life stage, can relate to Jesus who has lived that every life stage. Number two, God knows and loves children, whether they're born or unborn, it's in the Daily Devos, but there's this Greek word in the New Testament, called *brephos* Luke, who is a doctor, uses it in the Gospel of Luke, and Acts, and these are the history books of Christ and early Christianity, and he mentions a baby in the womb, and says it's a *brephos*. He mentions baby Jesus lying in the manger, the Merry Christmas picture, calls it a *brephos*, says that the children came running to play with Jesus, and calls them a *brephos*. The same word is used by Luke, who is a medical doctor, to say that the baby in the womb is a baby, same word as the baby who is in the manger, same word as the kids who are playing soccer. That all of those are *brephos*, they're all children, they're all children. And thirdly, Jesus said that heaven was for kids. Here's what I'm telling you, if you want to learn about heaven, don't hang out with religious people, hang out with kids. Amen, how many of you have kids and you enjoy it? 'Cause they're fun. They have an imagination, creativity, there's always time for snacks, ice-cream is assured to happen, and they have fun. And what happens is as we grow older, especially as we grow more religious, we grow more serious. The concept that Jesus uses of Heaven, is that it is made for children, and it is the religious people who have a problem with the children, and here in this story, the religious people think, "We're going to heaven, "we're very serious." The kids show up and they're like, "Hey, it's Jesus, let's have a party." And the religious people, rebuke the kids and then want to remove the kids, because they can't handle that kind of joyful environment. Question, is it the religious people or the kids, I'll read the story in a moment, which one really understands the culture of heaven? The kids, the kids do. If you wanna learn about the father heart of God, if you wanna learn about heaven, hang out with kids who are having fun. They actually probably, instinctively, know more about the kingdom of God, than religious people who have lots of verses, but nothing of the Spirit. Here's the case, Luke 18:15-17, "Now they were bringing even infants to Him." How many of you this is among your favorite pictures in the whole Bible? It's like Jesus is Santa at the mall, can I bring my kid? Can I bring my kid, can I bring my kid? And mom's are just bringing their kids, I saw this, I was working at a Marriott Hotel, I was a brand new Christian, a guy showed up, didn't know he was gonna be staying there, I don't know if you heard of him, his name was Billy Graham. So I'm carrying bags, and I look into the restaurant, and I'm like, coke-bottle glasses, Minnesota Twins, ball-cap, which shows he's a man of great faith, and he's sitting there eating breakfast, reading the newspaper, I'm like, "That looks like Billy Graham," I'm a brand new Christian. I walk in and I was like, "Excuse me sir?" And he's like, "Yes." I was like, "It's Billy Graham." You could just tell by the voice, he had the voice. I was like, "Are you Dr. Billy Graham?" "Yes, I am." I'm like 19, new Christian, I mean, I'm still smoldering, I just joined team Jesus, like I barely made it, like, I'm so excited. I was like, "Oh my

gosh, Dr. Graham." I said, "I'm a brand new Christian." He's like, "Well, good to meet you." He's like, "Well what do you do?" I said, "Well I'm working, "but ultimately I wanna be a pastor." I said, "I feel God's called me to be a pastor." He said, "Well then have a seat, let's talk about that." I'm gonna get fired and I don't care, okay, so I sit down, I'm gonna visit with Billy Graham. And we visited and he's like, "Okay, what's God teaching you "and are you spending time in the Scriptures? "And how's your prayer life?" I was like this is amazing, next thing I know, all my employees are like, "Where's Mark?" "He's in there, he's talking to somebody, and they are like "It's Billy Graham." You know, what started happening? Everyone at the hotel started bringing their kids to Billy Graham, now I'd ruined Billy's breakfast, I ruined it, he didn't have security, it was crazy, I couldn't believe it. Next thing I know, people who are staying in the hotel are bringing their kids, and they're like, "Dr. Graham, could you pray over my kid," And the kids are sitting on Billy's lap, and he's praying over them. Next thing I know maids are stealing Gideons Bibles, to have Billy Graham sign them on behalf of Jesus. They're like, "I got a Bible." I was like, "You stole it, like you stole the," that's okay. So literally I got people bringing their King James Bible, from their room for Billy to sign. Next thing I know everybody from behind the counter, all of the cooks and waiters, everybody literally on staff of this major Marriott, takes time coming to see Billy, and if they've got a kid that's staying with them at the hotel, they're having Billy pray over the kid. Billy Graham sat there, I don't know for how long, eventually I had to go to the airport, and pick people up who were really angry, 'cause I was really late, I was like, "Hey, Billy's here, you'll have to wait." So, but he was there for maybe one or two hours, no cameras, no paparazzi, nobody watching, he just loved people with the love of Jesus. Great man, extraordinary man, and afterward all my co-workers were like, "Billy is the coolest guy ever, "he prayed for us, he prayed for our kids." The same picture is here of Jesus, one kid, another kid, another kid, "Hey, Jesus, could you pray over my kid?" "Yeah," "Jesus, could you pray over my kid?" "Yeah," "Jesus could you pray over my baby?" "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." The religious people are like, "This needs to stop, "this is taking so long, we were gonna argue with Him." "And if we're not, we're gonna have hardly "any time to argue with Him." I think one of the reasons that people aren't excited about heaven, is they think that religious people are gonna be there, and if you're offended by that, you're religious right. Religious people who assume that they will be in heaven, and live in such a way that no one else wants to go there with them, may in fact not be going there. "Now, bringing even infants to Him "that He might touch them. "And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them." the children, and we're doing family style today, kids are in their own, so we parents are like, "What if they scream and yell?" Well, we can't rebuke them, I'll just tell you that right now, your kids just got a free pass with this verse. But Jesus what? He called them saying what? "Let the, let the who?" "Let the kids come to me, "Let the children come to me and do not, "don't hinder them, don't get in the way, "for to such belongs, to such belongs," what? The kingdom of God is made for what? Kids and you're not gonna get there unless you understand, that God is the Father, and that you are His child. And ultimately, we all need to come with childlike faith to the Lord Jesus, if we wanna enjoy the kingdom of God. And sometimes the problem with religious people, they take themselves too seriously, and they don't take Jesus seriously enough. "Truly I say to you, "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a?" "Like a small child, shall not enter it." If kids annoy you, if their laughter frustrates you, if their silliness bothers you, the problem is not with them, Amen,

it's not with them. I wanna declare that the Trinity Church is the Father's house. I wanna declare that we wanna do all that we can to welcome kids to come to Jesus. I wanna declare that if kids spill something, make noise, which they will, pick their nose, which they are right now, if they disrupt what we are doing, we assume that it is a blessing from the Lord to teach us a lesson. For those of you that are parents, know that sometimes we can have the same religious disposition, "My kids are ruining my routine, "they are messing up my environment, "they are interrupting my schedule." That's a religious heart that doesn't enjoy that moment of presence with the child, as a blessing and a gift from the Lord. Kids are not a problem in the way, they are a blessing to teach us the way. When you think about kids having fun, pool parties, birthday parties, sports teams, park days, being silly, movie nights, pajama forts, all of that, is something that is to educate us about the father heart of God, that we are His kids, and that the kingdom of God needs to be a place, where we get to have fun as the children of God. I'm so excited to reopen the kids ministry here, I'm so excited to hear kids laughing, and running, and playing, and as Nacho Libre says, "Getting their wiggles out." So let me close with this, some of you, and when I say that, I don't mean I'm closing, I just mean it's been a while, and you may not be paying attention, so if you're new, you'll get used to this. So then there's one verse, there's one case study in the Bible, that answers probably most clearly, what happens if a child passes. And the story is from 2 Samuel 2:15-23, I'll just read it to you quickly, the story is this, there's a guy named David, he is a king, and God loves him, but he's not a great guy. And what he does, he's up on his roof, and he sees a girl taking a bath, something you should not be doing, and he decides that though he has the kingdom, he also wants that woman, he takes her for himself, and they have a child. Meanwhile, her husband is away at war, he's a really great guy, and so David thinks, "Well I'll bring the guy home, "and then he could be with his wife, "and then he'll think that the kid is his." It's all a big cover up, and the guy says, "No, all the other soldiers are at war, "I can't come home and enjoy my wife, "because I am loyal to the cause and to my comrades." And so he doesn't do anything. So then David thinks, "Oh my gosh, I'm gonna get caught." And so what he does, he says, "Okay, everybody who's in war, "march forward, give the order, "but we all know that we're gonna retreat, "just don't tell the one guy, "so he'll go out and get murdered." Takes the guy's wife, then takes the guy's life okay. And here they are, the baby is born, "And the Lord afflicted that child, that Uriah's wife, "bore to David," never calls her David's wife. "And it became sick, "David, therefore, sought the child on behalf, "sought God on behalf of the child, "and David fasted and went in "and lay all night on the ground." He's mourning, he's weeping, he's begging, he's praying, he's crying, the baby is sick, the child is not well, some of you have been there, you're pleading for the life of the newborn. "And the elders of the house stood beside him." Everybody's praying to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them, this guy can't get up, he can't function, he can't eat, he is distressed and distraught. "On the seventh day the child died. "And the servants of David were afraid to tell him "that the child was dead, they said, "'Behold, while the child was yet alive, "'we spoke to him and he did not listen to us. "'How then can we say that the child is dead, "'he may do himself harm.'" They're like, "He is so depressed, "if he hears that this baby's gone, "we're afraid he's gonna take his own life." that's how worried there are. "But when David saw his servants were whispering together, "David understood that the child was dead. "And David said to his servants, "'is the child dead?'" "They said, 'He is dead.' "Then David arose from the earth,

"washed, and anointed himself, changed his clothes." Instantly goes from devastated to normal, instantly. "And then he went to the house of the Lord and worshiped, "and he went into his own house." So he goes to church worships God, and then he goes home. And when he asked, they set food before and he ate, he's like, "I'm hungry, I'd like some dinner." "When his servants asked him, "What is this thing you have done?" They're like, "what's going on?" "You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, "but when the child died, you rose and ate food?" "He said, "While the child was alive, "I fasted and wept for I said, who knows, "if the Lord will be gracious to me, "that the child may live?" "But now that the child is dead, "why should I fast?" Here's his question, "Can I bring him back again?" No, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." David says, "My kid isn't doing very good, "I'm gonna beg God to heal the child, "that did not happen, therefore, my hope and trust is "that the child is not coming back to me, "but it's gone before me, and I will be going to meet them." What is that? That's the hope of Jesus, that's the hope of Jesus. David had this confidence that the same God, who was faithful to him would be faithful to his son. All right, I began by telling you that that Grace miscarried, and I think it was a son. And so this is what I told the kids, when we had a family meeting, I said, "God is the Father, and Jesus is the Son. "And we worship a Father "who knows what it's like to lose a son." And just as I trust the Father, for myself, and our children, that would include the child that is unborn. Furthermore, the Son of God who took care of my sin, and made me a son of God, and took care of my family sin and made them sons of God, I believe also is perfectly capable, good, and well to take care of my son. Therefore, what I am looking forward to on the other side of this life is a family reunion. I believe that there is a sixth member of our family, that my kids have a sibling that they have not met. And I don't have a verse that guarantees me, but I have the character of God that assures me, that our family will have a reunion and a homecoming, and the last member of the family, will be enjoyed by the entire family together forever. Here's what I'm telling you, Jesus fixes everything, and if you belong to Jesus, Jesus fixes everything for you Amen. Father God, thank you for an opportunity to teach what can be a difficult series of subjects. God when we plan a trip, we do our homework, how do we get there? What it's gonna be like? God since the kingdom is our eternal home, we need to know, what it's gonna be like? Well, now we know. How do we get there? His name is Jesus, He is the Way, the Truth, the Life, no one gets there except through Him. Lord Jesus, I thank you that there's gonna be marvelous things to behold and experience. We don't even know what it's gonna be like to meet angelic, and divine beings, a new relationship with animals, where we're living in Madagascar, seems incredible. Our marriages are gonna be healed, and perfect, and loving, and it may not be exactly as the same, but it's certainly not going to be worse, it's only gonna be better. And God for all the kids, who didn't get to run, and laugh, and play, thank you that they're gonna get to run, and laugh, and play. For all the kids who didn't get to go outside, and play soccer, and climb a tree, and jump into the deep-end of a pool, that they will forever. Father, we are just so grateful that we grieve, but we don't grieve as those who don't have any hope. That for us, the worst thing is not to die, the worst thing is to die without Jesus, and the best thing is to be with Jesus forever. Father, I thank you that you are our Father, I thank you that we are your sons, I thank you for you Lord Jesus as the Son of God, and I thank you that you adopt us into your family, and that that adoption can even start in the womb, so that Lord God there is such great hope. And Lord Jesus as the whole world is gripped with fear, give us faith, as the whole world is



fearful of losing their life, let us look forward to the life that never ends. And as everyone is living with regrets, may we live with hope that you will overcome all that we regret, and restore all that we have lost, and reunite all that has been separated, and rejoin all who have been separated, in Jesus good name we pray, Amen