

Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Sunday Worship Service with Communion
10:30am 14 June 2026
Zoltan Biro leading & preaching
www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk
Find us on Facebook @Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



Covenant as Blessing (Genesis 17:1-10a)

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, we come before You with praise.
You are holy, faithful, and worthy of all honour and glory.
You made heaven and earth.
You give life to all people.
You love us with a great and lasting love.
Thank You for this day and for bringing us together as Your people.
Please receive our worship, our songs, our prayers, and our hearts.
Help us to see Your greatness and to rejoice in Your mercy.
Draw us near to You with joy and respect.
May everything we say and do in this service bring glory to Your name. Amen.

HYMN

Blessed be Your name
In the land that is plentiful
Where Your streams of abundance flow
Blessed be Your name

Blessed be Your name
When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed be Your name

Ev'ry blessing You pour out I'll
Turn back to praise
When the darkness closes in Lord
Still I will say
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be Your name

When the sun's shining down on me
When the world's all as it should be
Blessed be Your name

Blessed be Your name
On the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering
Blessed be Your name

You give and take away
You give and take away
My heart will choose to say
Lord blessed be Your name

Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name

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HYMN

I love You Lord
Oh Your mercy never fails me
All my days
I've been held in Your hands
From the moment that I wake up
Until I lay my head
I will sing of the goodness of God

All my life You have been faithful
All my life You have been so so good
With every breath that I am able
I will sing of the goodness of God

I love Your voice
You have led me through the fire
In darkest night
You are close like no other
I've known You as a father
I've known You as a friend
I have lived in the goodness of God

FAMILY TIME -

*(*An offering will be taken during the following song, after which teenagers and children will leave for their groups)*

BIBLE READING: Genesis 17:1-10

HYMN

Chorus

Bless the Lord O my soul O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name

The sun comes up it's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

Bridge

Your goodness is running after
It's running after me
Your goodness is running after
It's running after me
With my life laid down
I'm surrendered now
I give You everything
Your goodness is running after
It's running after me

All my life You have been faithful
All my life You have been so so good
With every breath that I am able
I will sing of the goodness of God

Ben Fielding | Brian Johnson | Ed Cash | Jason Ingram | Jenn Johnson
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And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore

Worship Your holy name
Lord I'll worship Your holy name
Sing like never before O my soul
I'll worship Your holy name
Worship Your holy name
Worship Your holy name

Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman © 2011 Thankyou Music Ltd

SERMON - Covenant as a Blessing Genesis 17:1–10

Introduction

Over the last few weeks, we have been exploring the meaning of covenant relationships. We have seen that a covenant is far more than a casual agreement. It is a promise, a commitment, and a relationship that binds people together in faithfulness. We have considered covenant as something that shapes our walk with God and our life with one another. Today we

come to another important truth, and it is one that we especially need to hear in our present moment: covenant is a blessing.

Many people today think of commitment as a burden. Ours is a culture that often celebrates freedom from obligation, freedom from responsibility, and freedom from anything that might tie us down. Yet when we open the Scriptures, we find a very different picture. Again and again, the Bible presents covenant not as a restriction, but as a gift. God's covenant with Abraham became the channel through which blessing flowed into his life, into his family, and ultimately into the whole world.

In Genesis 17, God renews and deepens His covenant with Abram. He changes his name to Abraham, confirms His promises, and shows that covenant relationship carries real blessing. So the question before us this morning is not simply what covenant meant for Abraham, but what covenant means for us. How can covenant relationships be a blessing for us as followers of Christ and as members of a church community?

1. Covenant Gives Us a Sense of Belonging

"I will establish my covenant between me and you..." (v.2)

Notice where the blessing begins. Before God promises descendants, before He speaks of land, before He speaks of fruitfulness, He first gives Abraham the assurance of relationship. "I will establish my covenant between me and you." The greatest blessing of covenant is not first what God gives, but that God gives Himself. In covenant, God is saying, in effect, "You belong to me, and I am committed to you." Abraham is invited into a relationship of belonging with the Creator of the universe, and there is no greater blessing than that.

Perhaps one way to picture this is to think about a family photograph. If you were to hold up a family picture and ask, "What makes someone part of this family?" the answer would not be achievement, wealth, or success. The people in that photograph belong because they are in relationship. They are part of the family. In much the same way, covenant tells us where we belong. It assures us that we are not spiritual strangers or outsiders, but people whom God has called near.

As Christians, we belong to God through Christ. And as church members, covenanting together is a way of saying, "I belong here. These are my people. This is the family God has called me into." Church covenanting is not about joining a club or putting our name on a list. It is a public and joyful embracing of a family relationship. In a world where so many people struggle with loneliness and isolation, covenant reminds us that we were never meant to walk alone. One of the great blessings of covenant is belonging.

2. Covenant Gives Us Identity and Purpose

"No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham..." (v.5)

The second blessing we see is that covenant gives us identity and purpose. In verse 5, God says, "No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham." This is one of the most significant moments in the chapter. Abram means "exalted father," but Abraham means "father of many nations." God gives Abraham a new name because He is giving him a new identity rooted in divine purpose. The covenant changes how Abraham understands himself, because it defines him not merely by his past or his limitations, but by God's calling over his life.

Think of it like being handed a name badge with a new role written on it. If the badge says "Teacher," or "Parent," or "Grandparent," that title changes the way you understand yourself and the way you live. In a similar way, God places a new name upon Abraham, and that new name carries a calling. Covenant reshapes who he is.

The same is true for us as a church. When we covenant together, we are declaring our shared identity. We are saying that we are disciples of Jesus, brothers and sisters in Christ, and a people called to worship, to serve, and to bear witness in the world. Church covenanting reminds us that Christianity is not merely an individual matter. God does not simply save isolated persons;

He forms a covenant people. And one of the blessings of covenant is that it helps us know both who we are and what we are called to do.

3. Covenant Creates a Future Filled with Hope

"I will make you exceedingly fruitful..." (v.6)

The third blessing we find in this passage is that covenant creates a future filled with hope. In verse 6, God tells Abraham, "I will make you exceedingly fruitful." What makes that promise so striking is Abraham's situation. He is nearly one hundred years old. Humanly speaking, the promise seems impossible. Yet covenant calls Abraham to trust God's faithfulness beyond what he can presently see. God's promise opens before him a future that only God can bring to pass.

An acorn is a helpful picture here. If you hold up an acorn and ask, "What do you see?" most people will simply say, "An acorn." But hidden inside that small seed is an oak tree, and perhaps generations of oak trees yet to come. The future is hidden within the seed. God's covenant promises often work in that way. Abraham could not yet see the nation that would come from him. He could not yet see Israel. He could not yet see the coming of Jesus. But God could, and God's vision of the future is always larger than our present circumstances.

That is why church covenanting is also an act of hope. When believers commit themselves to one another in Christ, they are investing in a future they cannot yet fully see. They are trusting God for children who will be discipled, for lives that will be transformed, for communities that will be served, and for people who will hear the gospel. Every covenant commitment says, in effect, that God is still at work and that His future is greater than our present limitations. One of the blessings of covenant is hope.

4. Covenant Blesses Not Only Us but Others

"I will make you the father of a multitude of nations." (v.4)

The fourth blessing in this passage is that covenant blesses not only us, but others also. In verse 4, God says that Abraham will become "the father of a multitude of nations." From the beginning, God's covenant with Abraham was never meant to stop with Abraham. The blessing was always intended to overflow. Through Abraham would come Israel. Through Israel would come the Messiah. And through Jesus Christ would come salvation for the nations. Covenant blessing always moves outward.

You might picture it like a stone dropped into a still pond. The ripples spread outward far beyond the point of impact. That is how covenant blessing works. It may begin with one person, but it does not remain there. It reaches a family, then a community, then a people, and by God's grace it extends even to the world. God's covenant purposes are never narrowly private; they are beautifully expansive.

The same is true in the life of the church. When a church enters into covenant together, the blessing is never meant to remain only within its own walls. A healthy covenant community becomes a blessing to its neighbourhood. People see love. People experience care. People encounter Christ through the life and witness of His people. The church becomes a living testimony to God's covenant faithfulness. One of the blessings of covenant is that it enables us to become a blessing to others.

So as we come to the close of this passage, Genesis 17 reminds us that covenant is not simply a contract, and it is not merely a set of obligations. It is God's gracious way of forming a people who belong to Him. Through covenant we receive belonging, identity, and hope, and through covenant God also makes us a blessing to others.

And all of this ultimately points us to Jesus Christ, through whom all God's promises find their fulfilment. The covenant God made with Abraham was never an end in itself; it was part of the great unfolding story that leads us to Christ. In Him we are brought near. In Him we receive a new identity. In Him we are given a living hope. And in Him we are sent out to bless the world.

As Baptists, when we covenant together as a church, we are not inventing something new. We are stepping into a long biblical story in which God's people commit themselves to God and to one another. So the question before us is this: will we see covenant merely as responsibility, or will we receive it as the blessing God intends it to be? May the Lord help us to embrace covenant relationships with gratitude, with faithfulness, and with joy. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your love and faithfulness.

We thank You that in Christ we belong to You and to one another.

Thank You for Your promises, for the hope You give us, and for the way You use Your people to bless others.

Thank You for the church, for our fellowship together, and for the joy of serving You.

Please receive our thanks for all You have done, for all You are doing, and for all You will still do among us.

Help us to be thankful, humble, and faithful as we walk together with Christ.

In His name we pray. Amen.

HYMN

1. Brother let me be your servant

Let me be as Christ to you

Pray that I might have the grace to

Let you be my servant too

2. We are pilgrims on a journey

We are brothers on the road

We are here to help each other

Walk the mile and bear the load

3. I will hold the Christ-light for you

In the night time of your fear

I will hold my hand out to you

Speak the peace you long to hear

4. I will weep when you are weeping

When you laugh I'll laugh with you

I will share your joy and sorrow

Till we've seen this journey through

5. When we sing to God in heaven

We shall find such harmony

Born of all we've known together

Of Christ's love and agony

6. Brother sister let me serve you

Let me be as Christ to you

Pray that I may have the grace to

Let you be my servant too

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PRAYER OF INTERCESSION (John)

Father God, as we were reminded last week, Jesus said that whatever we ask for in His name, it will be granted to us.

Lord, we know that it is Your will that we should live together in peace. Yet everywhere we look, we see wars and conflicts, violence and uprisings, breakdowns in relationships. This is not how it should be, and we know that it grieves Your heart. As a hymn puts it, we pray that You will: *Heal your children's warring madness, bend our pride to your control. Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days.*

Give wisdom and courage to all who work for peace where conflict rages. The war between Russia and Ukraine drags on and there seems to be no end to it. We pray that in Your mercy there will come a day when peace comes. We also ask that Your will be done in the conflict between Iran and Israel. We are all affected by what is happening in the Middle East, and the economic consequences are felt all around the world.

Closer to home, we have seen a number of horrific stabbings and the violent reactions to them. We pray for calm and that justice is seen to be done.

As the Prayer of St Francis reminds us: Where there is despair, Lord, use each one of us in this church to kindle hope. Where there is division, may each one of us sow unity. Where there is fear, may each one of us breathe courage. Where there is darkness, may each one of us be a shining light. We pray for these things according to Your will in the Name of Jesus. **Amen.**

HYMN

Chorus

Bind us together Lord
Bind us together with cords
That cannot be broken
Bind us together Lord
Bind us together Lord
Bind us together with love

1. There is only one God
There is only one King
There is only one body
That is why we can sing

2. Made for the glory of God
Purchased by His precious Son
Born with the right to be clean
For Jesus the vict'ry has won

3. You are the fam'ly of God
You are the promise divine
You are God's chosen desire
You are the glorious new wine
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BENEDICTION

Go now, and live before God in openness and integrity.
Set your minds on the ways of God,
not clinging to your own life,
but taking up your cross and following Jesus.
And may God give you a share in the eternal covenant;
May Christ Jesus be proud of you when he comes in glory;
And may the Holy Spirit make you grow strong in faith
and lead you in the ways of righteousness.



THE GRACE

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, **Amen**

QR Code for Financial
Offering

If you would like to contribute financially to Abbey International Baptist Church electronically, please scan the QR code to pay.

After the service, we have a church lunch downstairs.

7pm - Prayer & Worship Evening at The Globe.

Events to highlight this coming week:

Wednesday 17 th	10.30	Renew Wellbeing
	12.00	Bible Study
	2.00	This is Jesus – week 3
Thursday 18 th	10.30	Bible Study
	10.30	Toddlers
Friday 19 th	10.30	Prayer Meeting Upper Room
	4.30	Table Tennis Club

Sunday 21st 10.30 **Worship with Communion**
Covenant as fellowship
(Philippians 1:1-11)