

Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Sunday Worship Service with Communion
10:30am 7 June 2026
Selina Chan leading & Simon Bird preaching
www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk
Find us on Facebook @Abbey Baptist Church, Reading
Baptist Identity: Covenants, Covenanting and Being in a Covenant



THEME: John 14:1-21

Good morning, dear brothers and sisters. Just a recap of Zoltan's preaching last Sunday: covenant is God tying himself to His promises and calling His people to be bound to Him in faith. Therefore, God says, again and again, "I will be your God, and you shall be my people"

Today, Simon will help us further explore the concept of covenant as relationship.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled.
I will go to prepare a place for you."

**We are not orphans. We are the Children,
claimed by an everlasting covenant.**

He has sealed us with His Holy Spirit,
bridging the distance between heaven and earth.

He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Through Him, we come to the Father.

Step into His promise today.

He is in the Father, you are in Him, and He is in you.

In love, we bind our hearts to His.

Let us worship our Saviour. Amen.

HYMN BPW5

Be still for the presence of the Lord The Holy one is here

Come bow before him now In reverence and fear
In Him no sin is found. We stand on Holy ground
Be still for the presence of the Lord The Holy one is here.

2. Be still for the glory of the Lord Is shining all around
He burns with Holy fire. With splendour He is crowned
How awesome is the sight. Our radiant King of light
Be still for the glory of the Lord Is shining all around.

3. Be still for the power of the Lord Is moving in this place

He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister His grace
No work too hard for Him In faith receive from Him
Be still for the power of the Lord Is moving in this place.

David J. Evans © 1986, Thank you music

FAMILY TIME - Children of the King

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

HYMN BPW548

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still
And with all who will trust and obey

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey*

2. Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies
But His smile quickly drives it away
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear
Can abide while we trust and obey

3. Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet
Or we'll walk by His side in the way
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go
Never fear, only trust and obey

John Henry Sammis (1846-1919)

PRAYER

Almighty God,
We thank You that You have not left us as orphans,
but are bound by an everlasting covenant.
Thank You, Lord Jesus, for preparing a permanent place for us,
and for sending Your Holy Spirit to live within us.

Yet, we confess how easily our hearts are troubled.
We forget Your promises and carry our anxieties alone.
Forgive us for drifting away, doubting Your truth,
and letting our love for You grow cold.

**Cleanse us Lord, from our self-reliance.
Reassure us of Your forgiveness,
and empower us to live out our relationship
with You in joy and faithful obedience.**

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

BIBLE READING 1: John 14: 1-9

BIBLE READING 2: John 14: 10-21

SONG Who you say I am (from YouTube)

Who am I that the highest King, Would welcome me?

I was lost but He brought me in

Oh His love for me, Oh His love for me

Who the Son sets free, Oh is free indeed

I'm a child of God, Yes I am

Free at last, He has ransomed me, His grace runs deep

While I was a slave to sin

Jesus died for me, Yes He died for me

*In my Father's house, There's a place for me
I'm a child of God, Yes I am*

I am chosen not forsaken, I am who You say I am
You are for me not against me, I am who You say I am

Ben Fielding, Reuben Morgan © 2017 Hillsong,

SERMON Covenant as relationship - John 14:1-21

Have you seen a baby become anxious when it cannot see its mother? Or cries when first left at nursery? Children soon learn to settle in nursery or school and that 'mummy will come back!' Even as we grow older, we still need a sense of security in life. We can find this through a relationship with our covenant keeping God.

We are following a series about being in a covenant with God and each other. Last week Zoltan introduced the series, explaining that covenant is stronger than a contract. In a contract, 'I will do my part, if you will do yours,' but a covenant is expressed in relationship. It is like living in a home, rather than a hotel. Many times, throughout the bible, God repeats his desire, 'I will be your God, and you will be my people,' expressed in his promise of steadfast love and faithfulness. We cannot make God do this; but he chooses to do this and to love us. This is grace. Our part is to respond by being his people and to trust and obey him. This is our vertical relationship with God. It works out in our horizontal relationship with each other.

Our reading illustrates the kind of covenant keeping God we are dealing with, and the kind of relationship we are called into – with God and with each other. In it we find love, security, meaning, and purpose in life.

Jesus is talking with his eleven disciples (Judas has left) after the Last Supper. Jesus prepares his disciples for him going away, and the new relationship they will have with him. He tells them, 'I am going away, and where I am going you cannot come' (12:33). The disciples have been with him for three years; he has been their leader, very close, and now he says he is going away. They also thought as he was the promised Messiah: he would overthrow Roman rule. This is why they are confused, frightened, and troubled (14:1, 27).

In chapter 14, Jesus tells them things to reassure and give security. My Father's house has many rooms, and I am going to prepare a place for you (2) – they have a secure future. I am the way, the truth, and the life (6) – there is the security of a plan for the future. But I focus on one thing this morning. He says, 'I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you,' (18). An orphan is someone without parents, so this well describes their feeling of being abandoned. In the passage, he talks about them having a Father (2), and he calls them children (13:33). So instead of being orphans, he gives them the security of being children of God.

Testimony of adoption. We cannot 'not' be his children. Adoption gives a strong picture of our covenant with God.

I ask if anyone wants to be adopted as a child of God? The offer is there, but you must take it for yourself. We become children of God when we believe and receive him (Jn 1:12).

For those do who know they are Christians, I ask you to think what this means? Is there any way you still feel abandoned? Do you feel like an orphan? What does God say to us? You are no longer an orphan, but a child of God. Romans 8 says those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God, we are no longer slaves, we need not fear, the Spirit brings us to adoption and assures us we are children of God and have an inheritance (Rom 8:14-17). So, I look at what the passage shows about how being a child of God works out.

Firstly, the relationship they had with Jesus will continue. The disciples lived with Jesus for 3 years, so had a close relationship with him. Jesus therefore promises to ask his Father to send 'another one like him,' (16). That is the Spirit. Their relationship will continue, but it will be much better. He will help them; he will be with them for ever (16); and it will be even more intimate: he will live in them (17). What is more, it means that the billions of people down the ages, including us, share in this too. It is through the Spirit that we experience the love, assurance and presence of God in our lives.

Secondly, as children of God, we have the privilege of serving him in the power of the Spirit. Remember, as children of the King, we are princes and princesses, so we have purpose, destiny, status, and authority in life. It is our joy and destiny to serve Jesus, and share in extending his Kingdom. From our passage, you will see one way of exercising our authority is by prayer, Jesus says, 'you may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it' (14). We glorify God doing this (13). We are called to continue to do the works Jesus did (14:12), that is proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom, healing, and miracles.

Thirdly, we have a duty of love to God and each other. We are in a new covenant where, as promised by the prophets, God writes his laws on our hearts and gives us the Spirit to help us obey (Jer 31:31-33, Ez 36:25-27). We obey because we are saved, not in order to be saved. Jesus puts it like this: 'If you love me, you will obey my commands' (15, 21). This is the vertical part again. Also Jesus said, 'A new command, I give you: love one another.' (13:34). This is the horizontal part again: our relationship with each other. I add here, it is the Spirit's work, not only to mediate our relationship with God, but to create relationship with each other, though the fellowship (koinonia) of the Holy Spirit, as we say in the Grace Prayer at the end of our services (2 Cor 13:14).

Our covenant is primarily with God. However, the Baptist church arose in a time of persecution, when trusting each other, knowing each was a genuine follower of God, became so important. So we have the strong Baptist tradition of walking with and watching over each other, expressed as our horizontal covenant. An early English Baptist pioneer, John Smyth, spoke of the church as a covenant community with obligations to each other: 'the duties of love'.

Take-aways. Jesus's disciples were troubled when he was going away, he reassured them that their relationship would continue. Instead of being orphans, they had the security of being adopted children of God. You can become a child of God this morning, by believing in him and receiving him as Lord of your life.

For those who know we are Christians, we remind ourselves, 'I am no longer abandoned, but a child of God, adopted into God's family.' As children of the King, we are princes and princesses. We have purpose, destiny, status, and authority in life. We have the joy of reigning with him in victory, expecting our prayers to be answered and doing the works he did.

We express our (vertical) relationship to God by loving and obeying him, and this leads to our (horizontal) relationship of loving and being committed to one another.

HYMN MP1008

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home*

2. He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

3. And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff,
Are the comfort I need to know.

Stuart Townend © 1996 hank You Music

COMMUNION

We are invited to the table

Brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near to God with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22)

INSTITUTION: communion has a wealth of meaning

You will remember our reading today came after the Last Supper. Jesus shared the Jewish Passover with his disciples and gave new meaning to the bread and wine – his body and blood. His death was the price Jesus paid for us to be forgiven and brought into a new covenant relationship with him. We now call it the Lord's Supper and it is a time remember what Jesus has done and receive God's grace with thanks.

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Paul also saw sharing the Lord's Supper as a family meal together, but spoiled when they came together with divisions and selfishness. Like the early disciples, we come together to eat with glad and sincere hearts.

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf. (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)

So in the communion meal is a time to remember our covenant with God and all it cost him and our covenant and duty of love to each other.

This is the body of Christ, broken for you.
(take a piece of bread and eat as it is served to you)

This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.
(we drink together once all have been served)

POST COMMUNION PRAYER:

**Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.**

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION (Parisa and Hasan)

Heavenly Father, we thank You for inviting us into a covenant relationship with You. Thank You for Your promise that our hearts do not need to be troubled, because You are always with us. Help us to trust in You more deeply and to find peace and confidence in Your presence every day.

Lord Jesus, thank You for being the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Through You, we know the Father and experience His love. Teach us to follow You faithfully and to grow closer to You in our daily walk. May our lives reflect Your character and Your grace.

Holy Spirit, dwell within us and guide us in truth. Strengthen us when we are weak, comfort us when we are discouraged, and remind us of God's promises. Help us to obey Your Word out of love and gratitude, showing our devotion through faithful living.

Father, strengthen the covenant of relationship You have established with us. Fill our families, our church, and our community with Your love and unity. May we remain in Your love, experience Your presence, and become a witness of Your faithfulness to those around us.

We also lift up Iran and all nations affected by war, conflict, and violence. Lord, bring Your peace where there is fear, healing where there is suffering, and hope where there is despair. Protect the innocent, comfort those who mourn, strengthen those who serve others in difficult circumstances, and guide leaders toward wisdom, justice, and reconciliation. May Your love overcome hatred, and may Your peace reign in every troubled land. In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen.**

HYMN BPW 559

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down,
Fix in us your humble dwelling,
All your faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, you are all compassion,
Boundless love that makes us whole;
Visit us with your salvation,
Enter every trembling soul.

2.Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all your grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more your temples leave,
You we would be always blessing,
Serve you as your hosts above,
Pray, and praise you without ceasing,
Glory in your perfect love.

BENEDICTION

May we all go forth knowing we are bound to the Saviour,
by an everlasting covenant.
Do not let our hearts be burdened.

Christ is in the Father, and we are in Christ,
and His Spirit lives within us.
Walk in the security of His promise,
and let our love overflow without end.

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**

3.Finish then your new creation:
Pure and sinless let us be;
Let us see your great salvation,
Perfect in eternity:
Changed from glory into glory
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before you,
Lost in wonder, love and praise!

Charles Wesley (1707-88)



QR Code for Financial Offering

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Events to highlight this coming week:

Tuesday 9	8pm	Prayer meeting on Zoom
Wednesday 10	10:30 12:00 2:00pm	Renew Café Bible study This is Jesus – week 2
Thursday 11	10:30am 10:30	Toddlers Bible Study
Friday 12	4:30pm	Table Tennis
Sunday 14	10.30 7pm	Worship service, followed by church lunch Prayer & Worship Evening @ The Globe, easy parking