Sunday 25th October 2026

Loved from the Start

Deuteronomy 11:18–21* and *Mark 10:13–16

God's Love Comes First

What do we most want our children to know as they grow up?

How to read and write. How to make friends. How to cross the road safely. And, eventually, how to put their washing in the basket rather than beside it.

But beneath all that, we want them to know something deeper: the purpose of life, why we are here, etc.

"They are loved. They matter. They can come to us when things go wrong."

Today, as we celebrate the baptism of a child, we want to say something more: ***"God loves you too. You are welcome with him."***

In our reading from Mark's gospel, people bring children to Jesus. But his followers try to stop them.

Jesus is upset by this.

"Let the little children come to me," he says. "Do not hinder them."

Then he takes the children in his arms, places his hands on them and blesses them.

Notice what he doesn't do.

He doesn't test their knowledge. He doesn't ask whether they can sit still. He doesn't tell their parents to bring them back when they are older.

He welcomes them the way they are.

That is the **welcome** we want our children to grow up knowing. They don't have to become older, cleverer or more impressive before they matter to God.

Today's baptism is not a prize for this child's good behaviour, or a certificate saying the parents have everything sorted. It is a way of saying, here among us: God's love comes first.

So how do we help a child grow up knowing that love?

Our first reading gives us a very ordinary answer. Deuteronomy tells people to teach their children about God at home, on the road, at bedtime, and when they wake up. Not just on special occasions, but in the middle of everyday life.

For us, that might mean three simple things.

The first thing is:

1. **Talk about God naturally**

You don't need to give a speech.

At bedtime, you might ask, *"What shall we thank God for today?"*

When your child is worried, you might say, *"Let's ask God to help us."*

And when they ask a difficult question, it is fine to say, *"I don't know. Let's think about that together."*

We don't need to pretend we have every answer to make room for God in our family life.

So, talk about God naturally: At bedtime, in worries, and in difficult questions, make room for God in everyday conversation.

The second thing is:

2. **Let love become something they experience**

We can tell a child that God is loving. We can also help those words mean something:

- By listening when they speak.
- By putting down the phone sometimes. And giving them attention.
- By being firm without being cruel.
- By saying, *“What you did was wrong, but I still love you.”*
- And when we get it wrong, by saying, *“I’m sorry.”*

The aim is not to be a perfect parent. It is to keep coming back to love.

So, let love become something that your children experience. Listen, be firm but with love, and show that you are not perfect, just a human being.

The third and final thing is:

3. **Make room for children**

Jesus’ words challenge the whole church, not just parents.

Children should not have to be silent, tidy or useful to be welcome among us.

They need people who learn their names, listen to their questions and are pleased to see them.

So if you are here today with a child who wriggles or makes a noise, please don’t feel embarrassed. We are glad you are here.

Whether you come to church often, rarely, or for the first time, the picture at the heart of today is simple: Jesus making room for children and taking them into his arms.

So, give your children and yourself the opportunity to experience life in community. Let them know they have another family, a church, a place with uncles, aunties, grannies, and grandpas, and friends like cousins.

That is what we want children to discover, through our words and through our care:

Just tell them that God loves them; know that God loves you, and that you, as a family or individual, can always come to Him.

At home, talk about God naturally. Let love become something your children experience, and let them feel they belong to the church.

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