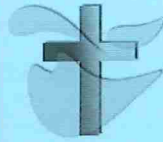


15.04.18

Speaker: Bryce Millar



# TAUPO BAPTIST CHURCH

A TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY COMMITTED TO JESUS CHRIST

## SERMON SUMMARY

In the movie "Finding Neverland", Johnny Depp plays J.M. Barrie – the play write and creator of Peter Pan. As the play is being practiced, the theatre producer says "the curtain goes up and there on the stage are fairies, crocodiles, pirates, Indians and flying children... I don't know what to make of it"... and so on the opening night 25 seats are reserved in the audience – and these seats are filled with children from a local orphanage. And as the children enter, they stare up at the beauty of the building, they are thrilled with the excitement of the music, they experience the magic of the theatre.

Then the play starts and they laugh at the man dressed as a dog acting as the children's nanny. They marvel as Peter Pan flies in through the window. They scream in fright as the pirates come crashing onto the stage. They experience the play in a different way than the lawyers, doctors, socialites and the well-off patrons of the theatre do – those who have come to be seen themselves as much to see what is happening on the stage. But as the play goes on, the reactions of the children begin to be matched by those of the adults. Laugh and applause fill the theatre. All leave enriched by the action on the stage that was informed and unlocked by the laughter of the child that sat next to them.

Today we are going to read Ephesians One – a part of scripture that has massively informed my ministry here and prioritized especially what I have talked about with our young people. READ EPHESIANS ONE WHAT JUMPED OUT AT YOU AS WE READ TODAY?

As I read Ephesians one – this is what I hear. God loves and chooses and calls each of us.

God loves me an overwhelming amount – He is proud of me, and He delights in me, He celebrates my learnings and picks me up when I fail and fall. God loves each of us. Before the creation of the world God saw us and loved us, before He uttered the words "let there be light", He knew us and loved us.

The prophet Zephaniah said it like this: The Lord your God is in your midst,

a mighty one who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness;

He will quiet you by his love; He will exult over you with loud singing.

God loves you and God loves the person next to you and God loves all people.

And in the midst of loving all people, God chooses all people too. He chooses us to be holy and faultless. He chooses us to pour out his kindness and grace towards. He chooses us to be showered with wisdom. He chooses us to fill with the Holy Spirit and to operate with his gifts.

He makes a place for each of us in His kingdom and church and family. God decided in advance to adopt us into His family There is a place reserved for you in the family of God today.

Today there are 25 reserved seats in this church. Those seats belong to someone whom God loves and calls. It is their space here in our midst and in God's body. It doesn't belong to us – it belongs to them. God saved that place for them. He made space for them. He choose them before He created the world to know Him and to have a place in this body and in his kingdom. That place is reserve by God for someone. And they are very welcome to it.

If you are hear this morning and you haven't taken up your place in the family of God – talk to the person next to you. They would love to talk with you more about following Jesus and join in with His kingdom.

God decided in advance to adopt you into His family and it gives him great pleasure to do so. I hope and pray you respond to the invitation of God to join his family and to participate in His kingdom.

And if you don't decide to today – your space is always reserved. It is always open for you.

God will continue to wait for you.

God chose you to be in His family. And God chooses all people to be in his family as well.

And God calls all people too. He has a job for you. He has a job for you that only you can do. That seat is reserved for you, not only so you know you have a place, but because we need you in that place. This body and the kingdom of God needs you to be you and to be used by God, to hear His voice as he speaks to you and through you, to experience God and to tell us about it and to stretch our understanding and expectation.

Our own understanding of God and how He moves and what He is saying is expanded by others– both the wisdom of the experienced and the joyful wonder of the young, the difficult questions of some and the quiet

faith of the others – our way with God is bigger and better and brighter when we do it alongside others who are different from ourselves. God speak to and through people of all ages, God engages with and through people of all nations, God loves and loves through all manner of people and so if we want to experience God at His fullest, then we have to make space next to ourselves to experience God and learn about God through those who are different from ourselves.

We have to get better at seeing and listening.  
And we have to get better at showing and sharing.  
The future of Taupo Baptist Church is relying on this.

You all have something to give to the other next to you – prayer and encouragement, stories about how God works that expands our understanding, practical help, fellowship and companionship, the list goes on. Maybe you need to grow in your confidence to offer prayer. Maybe you need to open up about what God is doing in your life – to share your growth and your stumblings. Maybe you need to know that your simple presence can be something significant to another who is feeling along or misunderstood. We are call to minister to the people next to us and to the people in the reserved seats – no matter their age or ability or nationality or sexuality or punctuality... you are called to love like God does and to help them experience Jesus.

And the person next to you can do these things for you too – they can help you encounter God in a new way. They can help you hear God’s voice speaking something new and needed. They can help you experience the love and direction and calling of Jesus for yourself. They are called to show us the love of God and to help us experience Jesus as well – so are we listening and are we watching to see Jesus move in them and through them>

We are all called to minister to and to receive from the people next to us – even the people in the reserved seats - to share each other’s experience and understanding, to grow each other – to teach and to learn, to listen and to speak, to give and to receive.  
Because all people are called to be the ministers of God’s love and all people are chosen to be the recipients of God’s love too.

#### REFLECTION

**What do I have to offer the person next to me?** What can I teach them about God, how can I show them His love, How can I help them encounter their loving saviour?  
What do I have to offer the person next to me?

And secondly, **Am I willing to have my relationship with Jesus expanded by someone in the reserved seats?** Am I willing to listen and learn from some different than myself? Am I open to hearing God’s voice through someone younger or differently abled? Am I looking for Jesus in all places and in all people?  
Am I willing to have my relationship with Jesus expanded by someone in the reserved seats?

#### FURTHER QUESTIONS

What is the most valuable thing I have learnt about God from any person next to me [instead of up the front or from a book for example]? How have I encounter God differently because of another?  
Are there particular people I struggle to learn from? Why? What can I do to change this?  
How can I cultivate an attitude of learning from all people?

How can I create these reserved seats in my life—deliberately leaving space for those who are different to teach me and help me encounter God?