

Chat with Children: Goodbye

- School:
 - your friend says they are going to be moving away - to another school, another area...
 - or you have to move, and leave your friends behind?
 - has that ever happened to you?
- What was it like? What did you feel?
 - sad, lonely, miss them...
- What about later: did you make new friends?
 - feelings?
- We all have to die someday:
 - and when someone dies who we love, and we are left behind, sad...
- That's what we are going to be thinking about this morning:
 - grief, the sadness that comes when someone dies because we have lost the relationship with them that we had...
- *Pray for God's help as we deal with a difficult topic*

Introduction

- Phrase I sometimes have used in funerals when introducing some of the Scripture readings:
 - "one of the, I suppose, reassuring facets of Christian faith is the reality with which it faces life..."
 - in other words, doesn't shy away from death
- And if you read the Scriptures, that is very clear
- Sometimes, however, we tend to "edit" or pigeon hole certain topics
 - God has stuff to say to us, to allow us to talk about with him and with one another
 - and what we do today is part of that opening up
- Death like graffiti on life, messing up - there are always splashes...
 - and often in unexpected places...

Being Ready

- Someone close to you becomes ill... the reality of their mortality comes home to you... now what?
 - Lord, help me to be ready, and to help those I love to be ready
- Being ready to let go
 - open to sharing Jesus
 - open to praying... even sharing the Lord's Prayer...
 - open to reading a little bit from the Bible...
- But there may be things left unresolved with them - and we cannot always sort them; we can't force people to deal with things on their deathbed they have been unable or unwilling to deal with beforehand!
- May well raise things for us, and how we are feeling about our own death...
 - are we ready to die?
 - clear in our relationship with him
 - aware that the feelings of fear and uncertainty as our "turn" comes near will still be there - and perhaps all different
- (We don't have this in the Abraham story)

Saying Farewell

- Being honest, being gentle, giving time, giving presence...

- being gentle with ourselves too - seen people beat themselves up over things they felt they should have done...

- Funerals
- People we didn't get the chance to say farewell to
- People we fear don't know the Lord
- Abraham sorting the grave...

Gone

- What might we feel?
 - relief, guilt, sadness, anger...
 - directed at them, directed at God, directed at other people...
- What has happened to them - are they looking down on us?
 - they are in heaven, focused on God, at home with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8)
 - only one passage in Scripture might hint of some kind of looking down:
 - *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)*
 - **their lives** are witnesses **for** us, not **of** us - **their lives point to Jesus**
 - hence v.2, **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus...**
- If they knew the Lord they are with him
 - if they rejected his salvation, persisting in their rebellion, then they are cast out of his presence for all eternity
- Abraham lived for a number of years without Sarah, without his wife and companion

What Now?

- Our grief will not be all over; will come round (tears on the train)
- There will be changes
 - (twins, saying grace, my gran)
 - new things to do, old routines changed
 - possibly new space and opportunities
 - space to rest and recover...
- God blessed Isaac - there is hope for good things, even once someone precious is gone
 - we don't somehow slip out of God's care or blessing

Jesus and Lazarus

- Shortest verse in Bible:
 - *Jesus wept (John 11:35)*
- Stands with us in our grief, understands, comforts...
- But he is also the Lord of death, the God of hope
 - he broke up that funeral, bringing Lazarus back to life....
 - (admittedly only for a while - was Lazarus lucky or unlucky to get to die twice?!)