

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH - 12TH JULY 2020

'Church at Home' - Living in the now with God

Welcome

Welcome to our 'Church at Home' service for Sunday 12th July. In today's sermon we are going to be looking at some Bible verses to help us live in this present moment with God. It's such a strange time we are living in right now, and it can be really easy to wish for the past or worry about the future, instead of living in the now. So I pray that this letter will encourage you to live in the now with God."

- Rev. Andrew Gill

Call to Worship – Revelation 1:8 (NIV)

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Opening Prayer

Almighty God,

your eternal mercy

arises new in the morning of another day.

Give us grace to arise with Christ

who is our morning light.

In this new day of our life's journey,

may we walk by faith in him and with a willing spirit

persevere us to the end

through the same Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Reading - Matthew 6:25-34

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Sermon - “Living in the now with God”

Does your mind spend more time living in the past, the present, or the future?

This is the second sermon in a series helping us to think about the lessons we can learn at this moment as we journey out of lockdown. Every crisis brings change, and this pandemic will have a profound and lasting impact on our world. But right now, we are living in the in-between. Life is not what it was, but it is not yet what it will be. What we considered to be ‘normal life’ is changing all around us. Take church for example. It was normal for us to all meet together, but today some of us are reading this at home, while others are meeting physically in our building, and some are watching at their computers. It was normal to sing, but now we only listen to music. It was normal to greet each other with a hug or a handshake, but now we show our care by staying away.

Today we find ourselves living in this moment between what was and what will be, and there are a few different ways we can respond. Some of us will want to hit the rewind button and go back to the past, while others will want to hit fast forward and move quicker into the future. But I believe the Bible teaches us we can find the most joy by simply being here and now and living with God in ‘the what is.’

In today’s sermon we will look at three scriptures to help us live in this present moment with God.

1. Isaiah 43:18-19 - *“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” (NIV)*

The danger of dwelling on the past is that we can miss what God is doing in our lives right now. Last week we were thinking about the importance of remembering the past with thanksgiving to help us trust in God today. So when this verse says, ‘forget the former things’ that’s not a contradiction, because in the context God is simply saying, “don’t become so obsessed with the past that you ignore the present.” Yes, there are good days in the past, but they are not the best days, because the best days are still to come. The God of new things is still at work, and if all we are looking at is what he did *then*, we won’t see what he is doing *now*. When you are reading a book you might need to occasionally go back a few pages to understand what you are reading now, or mark the page of your favourite part, but you would never just re-read the first chapter over and over again and again without finishing the whole book. God is still writing your story, do not spend so much time living in the past, that you miss the new thing that God is doing right now.

But for some of us the problem to living in the present is not our fixation on the past but our fear of the future. So let’s look at our second passage...

2. Matthew 6:34 - *‘So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today. (NRSV)*

This verse is from Jesus’ teaching about worry from the sermon on the mount. In the rest of the section Jesus reminds his listeners of God’s love and provision for all our needs. Worrying achieves nothing, and for the Christian it is unnecessary because we can trust God with our lives. So instead Jesus says to seek after God’s kingdom and his righteousness. God is the author of your future, so don’t spend so much time worrying about tomorrow, that you ignore the good he wants you to do today.

Or maybe for you the issue is not *worrying* about the future, but it's *wishing* for the future. Maybe you think that happiness is in *what's next* instead of *what's now*. So the 5 year old says, I'll be happy when I'm 6. And the teenager says I'll be happy when I've left school. And the student says, I'll be happy when I have a job. And the worker says I'll be happy when I retire! Chasing after what's next won't make you happy, contentment can only be found in knowing Jesus today.

3. James 4:13-15 - *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money." Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that."*

If the last few months have taught us anything it is that we never know what is next. Of course that doesn't mean it's wrong to have ambitions, or that we shouldn't make plans or provisions for the future. What James is warning us against here is being arrogant about our plans. Don't spend so much time dreaming about tomorrow that you fail to be a doer of God's will today.

The Gospel tells us that Jesus died in the past, and will return again in the future. But we are called to live today, in-between those two events. We remember the past with thanksgiving, and we look forward to the future with hope, but we live for today with joy and faith. Now is not the moment to wallow in the past or worry about the future, now is the moment to seek God's Kingdom and do his will.

Closing Prayer

Father God,
you are from everlasting to everlasting,
without beginning or end of days.
Replenish us with heavenly grace we pray,
so that we might be enabled
to do your will,
seek your Kingdom,
and welcome your mercies.
Give us faith to meet today's trials
and enough grace for our present troubles.
Fill us with your Spirit,
so that neither wishing for the past
nor worrying about the future,
would separate us from the joy of knowing you in this moment.
Though Christ you have called us to endless life,
and in his great name we pray, Amen

Doxology

*"Holy, Holy, Holy,
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!"*

Amen