

# **ST ANDREW'S CHURCH - 19TH JULY 2020**

## **'Church at Home' - Looking forward**

### **Welcome**

*Welcome to our 'Church at Home' transcript of Sunday 19th July. In today's sermon from Revelation 5 we are thinking about what lockdown can teach us about our attitude towards heaven, and we will see that our soul doesn't want to 'go back to normal', it's longing to be in heaven with Christ"*

*- Rev. Andrew Gill*

### **Call to Worship – Psalm 84:1-2**

How lovely is your dwelling place,

Lord Almighty!

My soul yearns, even faints,

for the courts of the Lord;

my heart and my flesh cry out

for the living God.

### **Opening Prayer**

Father God,

by your mighty power you exalted your dearly beloved son into to the heavens, that he might prepare a place in your kingdom of glory for all who love you.

Merciful Lord,

Lead us and uphold us, so that we might follow the holy steps of Christ's life here on earth, and may enter with him into your everlasting rest;

that where he is, we might be also;

through the one who made us worthy, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## **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 - Revelation 5:6-14**

*Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. And they sang a new song, saying:*

*"You are worthy to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
because you were slain,  
and with your blood you purchased for God persons  
from every tribe and language and people and nation.  
You have made them to be a kingdom  
and priests to serve our God,  
and they will reign on the earth."*

*Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying:*

*“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,  
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength  
and honour and glory and praise!”*

*Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:*

*“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb  
be praise and honour and glory and power,  
for ever and ever!”*

*The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

### ***Sermon - “Looking forward”***

*What did you miss the most during lockdown?*

What one word would you use to describe what you really longed for during those first few weeks?

Would it be; restaurants, sport, school, work, travel, concerts, hair dresser, church, shopping? For me it would be *people*. I was by myself for lockdown and felt the pang of not being able to see Julie, my family, or the people from church.

Everyone's lockdown was different, but we all to some level experienced that feeling of longing for something that was missing from our lives. Almost as if we were homesick even while we were stuck in our homes. Perhaps you are still feeling it. But that sense of longing is actually a positive thing because it can teach us something really important.

To learn from it we need to properly understand it. Too often when we feel like that, we say to ourselves something like, 'I just want life to go back to normal', or we ask, 'when will everything get back to normal?' But as we were thinking last week, you can't go back. Life moves forward, not backward, so wishing for the past achieves nothing. Also, if we're being honest, the 'normal life' that we are all craving for, wasn't always that great. Sometimes we act like we all lived perfect lives in February before this pandemic started. But that wasn't the case. In fact I'm fairly confident that you had some sense of longing then too. It might not have been as noticeable as it is now, but that feeling of something missing has probably always been there.

Our soul has a hunger for belonging and purpose that can't be satisfied by a getting a haircut, traveling around the world, eating in a busy restaurant, or even with the hug of a loved one. If you were able to hear your soul speak this morning, it would be saying that what it longs for is *heaven*.

At this moment as we journey out of lockdown, and we experience this sense of dissatisfaction with the way things are, we need to understand that our soul is telling us that ultimately we don't belong here. This world is not our home, we are just passing through, and our soul's desire is to be at home in heaven with God.

The Bible describes heaven as a place with no disease, no death, no injustice, no sadness, no fear, and no sin. Where people live lives of perfect peace, perfect joy, and perfect love. They experience fullness of community, know their true identity, and find their upmost purpose. While there is still so much we don't know or can't understand about heaven, we know the most importing thing, that is where we will be with Christ. That is what we were made for, and our soul will always be restless until we get there.

This is our 3rd week back in our church building, and it's been great to be able to meet together again to pray and read the bible. But so many people have said that they miss singing. It's the same if you are watching on-line, you can listen to worship songs, and even sing along, but you still miss singing with the whole church. And it can be easy to say, 'I can't wait until we are allowed to sing in church again,' but that's not really the day for which your soul longs.

In Revelation chapter 5 the Apostle John is given a vision of heaven. In the centre he sees Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, on the throne. Around him there are four heavenly creatures who start playing music and sing a new hymn of praise to him. Then the rest of the stage lights up and there is a choir of thousands and tens of thousands of angels joining with them worshiping at the top of their voice, *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing!"* (Revelation 5:12 ESV)

And then, like an audience at a concert, all of creation joins in. Humans, animals, birds, even the fish under the sea, all lift up their praise to Jesus!

That is what your soul longs for, that is what you were made to do, that is the moment to look forward to. You don't want life to go back to normal, your deepest desire is to be in heaven with Jesus. And the great news is that that desire can be satisfied. If your faith is in Jesus Christ, if you have repented of your sin and accepted his gift of forgiveness, then that is a certain picture of your future.

John received his revelation from God about heaven while he was in prison because of his faith. He was an elderly man on a remote island with no restaurants or leisure activities, away from his family, his friends, and his church that he loved. Life was difficult and he needed encouragement, so Jesus gave him a hope for the future. But he did not give him a hope of lifting his lockdown, or in returning to his normal life, but a hope of eternal life. Your soul longs for heaven, so let heaven be your hope for the future.

### **Closing Prayer**

*Father God,*

*Thank you for all your faithfulness to me in the past,*

*and that through Christ I can be forgiven and have eternal life.*

*Thank you that through the gift of the Spirit you live with me now,*

*and that by the promise of heaven I will live with you forever.*

*God of hope*

*fill me with all joy and peace*

*as you trust in you,*

*so that my heart may overflow with hope*

*by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*Amen*