

WELCOME

God welcomes us to church this morning as we welcome one another in person and online. This is the God who tells us “**I am with you always,**” (Matthew 28:20 which means wherever we are He is there. Traditionally this is Christ the King Sunday so we come to worship our Lord and King Jesus Himself.

HYMN 129 The Lord is King

1. The Lord is King lift up your voice
Let earth and all the heavens rejoice
From world to world the joy shall ring
The Lord Omnipotent is King

2. The Lord is King who then shall dare
Resist His will distrust His care
Or murmur at His wise decrees
Or doubt His royal promises

3. The Lord is King child of the dust
The Judge of all the earth is just
Holy and true are all His ways
Let every creature speak His praise

4. Come make your wants, your burdens known
Christ will present them at the throne
For He is at the Father's side
The Man of Love the crucified

5. One Lord one empire all secures
He reigns and life and death are yours
Through earth and heaven one song shall ring
The Lord Omnipotent is King.

Josiah Conder (1789 – 1855)

From Psalm 148

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Lord you are far, far more wonderful than our words can ever say, or our minds imagine. We praise you because you are the source of all that is good, true and free. It is your desire to fill our lives, our thoughts and our hearts with all your goodness, truth and love. We praise you that you are a God who longs to set all your creatures free – free not to please ourselves, to make our own selfish plans or seek our individual personal satisfaction but free to be the people you always meant us to be from the very beginning. Lord your offer of freedom begins with the empty cross and empty tomb and the filling of your people with your Holy Spirit. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, you Lord God have demonstrated your power to set all things free, that in Him we shall have all the resources of heaven and earth to enable us to praise you as you deserve. Lord may the freedom you give bring you endless glory Jesus as you now sit on the throne of heaven.

Father God we have heard the story of your infinite mercy yet we have failed to be merciful ourselves. We have received your love in abundance yet we have not been loving to one another. You have dealt kindly with us but we have been hard hearted. Father again and again we have broken our promises as by our self-centredness and self interest we have broken your heart. We have refused to share the pain of the lonely, the agony of the broken and the despair of the lost. We have turned to you so many times for forgiveness and yet we have withheld the forgiveness we have received from those who have offended us. To our amazement your mercy is still there for us and the opportunity remains to forgive and be forgiven. Help us in all we do say and offer to show your love in our loves. In Jesus name we pray saying together the words which he taught; Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

READING Revelation 22:1-5 Read by Susan White (Ettrick and Yarrow)

22 The angel also showed me the river of the water of life, sparkling like crystal, and coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² and flowing down the middle of the city's street. On each side of the river was the tree of life, which bears fruit twelve times a year, once each month; and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. ³ Nothing that is under God's curse will be found in the city.

The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ ^[a] They will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no more night, and they will not need lamps or sunlight, because the Lord God will be their light, and they will rule as kings forever and ever.

REFLECTION

Here we are at the end of the E100 Bible Series – Revelation 22. The End or is it? For by the end of Revelation we have come full circle. God’s creation is back where He had always intended, the home of peace and right living, inhabited by a people who have been saved, renewed and ready to be in God’s company for ever without fear of recrimination, retribution.

Revelation 1 starts with a message – happy are the ones who read this book, who listen to the words of the prophetic message and most importantly who obey what is written. I believe that although the writer John, most probably the disciple John although some would argue against that, is talking of the book of Revelation, the Holy Spirit guided the people who put the Bible together to make Revelation the last book so he is also talking about the whole Bible.

We were thinking a couple of weeks ago about the necessity for individual Christians and for the church at large to live life in a counter cultural way, to be distinctive people. The Bible shows us how.

The readings this week will take you to the letters to the seven churches, give you a sneaky preview of worship a la heaven, they don’t take you through the difficult passages about the final battle which will take place at God’s appointed time and finally ends with the wedding feast, the defeat of Satan, the final judgement and then the promise of the new heaven and the new earth.

Our reading today provides us with one glimpse of what that will be like. Through chapters 21 and 22 there are seven different mini revelations of the future which will be perfect. The one we’re looking at is the third revelation – talking of God’s world renewed.

When you’ve been away on holiday, when you’ve been away for work I’m sure there are times you long for home, your own fireside, your own bed, your own type of food, the comfort, the security of being home.

We as Christians are a people going home – home to a place of plenty, a place of peace, a place of protection, a place of power - a place called Paradise – the place where God intended His people to live forever before the Fall. Revelation 22 shows us God’s creation, the Garden of Eden renewed forever.

What is in this Garden?

The first thing that comes leaping out is the River of

The Water of Life. Think with me for a moment about how refreshing, pure, sparkling, clear water is – especially when you are hot and sweaty, thirst quenching and dirt busting. It’s running down the middle of the street – the place where sewage used to flow. Inside and out, water is refreshing, cleansing and renewing. This water of life runs right through the Bible; the river watering the garden of Eden, nourishing the life of OT saints, then explained by Jesus as His life giving Spirit to the woman at the well. “He who believes in me, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.”

The promise that as we are refreshed and renewed we will be vessels through which others can find the source of the water of life. A humbling thought.

The Tree of Life. There is a very similar vision in the book of Ezekiel. He has multiple trees not just the one. But here we're back to one, which was as it was in the beginning. The most significant parallel of this passage is with the opening of Genesis – the summary of the Biblical doctrine of creation has the tree of life. Remember there was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the one that people weren't supposed to eat, though they could eat from the tree of life. But the minute they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – sin came into the world and, for their own safety, God removed them from the garden - explicitly so that they would not have the opportunity to eat from the tree of life. Can you just imagine how awful it would be to have sin around forever – that would have been the result if they'd stayed in the garden?

Now though the tree of life is back again – it's a strange picture with the tree of life being around on both sides of the river. One commentator suggests that it is like a vine, spreading outwards. What is significant for us though is the regularity of the fruit – 12 times a year, once a month. And because it is being watered by the river of life there will be fruit forever, plentiful, productive. Professor William Barclay suggests that fruit in each month perhaps symbolises God's special grace for each age from the cradle to the grave. Think too though of the Fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control – the Spirit of God will provide this fruit in our lives forever in the new world. The leaves from the tree of life provide healing – for all, completeness, wholeness, shalom.

The God of life – calls us to come into His presence forever. The throne of God and the Lamb is a reminder to us of the cost to God of calling us to come, the throne in the midst of the people. The throne of protection, peace and power. The ability of the people, you and me, to see God face to face – not even Moses was allowed that.

His name written on the foreheads of His people. Like sheep with the brand of the owner prominently displayed so that all can see, we are claimed by our God to be His and His alone.

He calls us to be His, spending our time in worship and work – ruling as kings forever.

Don't you just long to go home?

The whole Bible from beginning to end speaks of God's love for us His people, His saving power through the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus, His promise that one day He will come again and take those who love Him to be with Him forever in this place we've just looked at, this place of plenty, this place of peace, this place of protection, this place of power, this place of presence – God's eternal, clear presence.

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Till then He promises us His presence through His Spirit to encourage us through the good and bad times of our lives, to equip us for living our lives here and now as well as preparing us for our future life with Him. What a promise, what a God, what love. Hallelujah! Amen

HYMN 466 **Before the throne of God above**

1. Before the throne of God above

I have a strong a perfect plea
A great High Priest whose name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
No tongue can bid me thence depart

2. When Satan tempts me to despair

And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end to all my sin
Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me
To look on Him and pardon me

3. Behold Him there! The Risen Lamb

My perfect spotless righteousness
The great unchangeable I AM
The King of glory and of grace
One with Himself I cannot die
My soul is purchased with His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ my Saviour and my God
With Christ my Saviour and my God

Charitie L. De Chenez (1841 – 1923)

Meditation: Hans Kung, The absolute Future

What kind of kingdom will this be? It will be a kingdom where, in accordance with Jesus prayer, God's name is truly hallowed, his will is done on earth, human beings will have everything in abundance, all sin will be forgiven and all evil will be overcome.

It will be a kingdom where, in accordance with Jesus' promises, the poor, the hungry, those who weep and those who are downtrodden will finally come into their own, where pain, suffering and death will have an end.

David Watson. When I die it is my firm conviction that I shall be more alive than ever, experiencing the full reality of all that God has prepared for us in Christ.

For now we have the promise of the Spirit of God to lead us, guide us, direct us and comfort us as we seek to be in part the answer to the prayer we make each week – Your Kingdom come, Your will be done O Lord on earth as in heaven. He is also the guarantee of the future life to come. He never forces himself on us but as we ask him he comes and ministers to us, in order that we might minister to others. What a wonderful God we have.

Hans Kung On being a Christian © 1974 tr. Edward Quinn William Collins p 215

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Creator God, you have so kindly blessed us with so many gifts in this, your world. Help us to share in that generosity by living in a way that ensures that your gifts will continue to be available for future generations.

Lord hear us. O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation Creator God,

We rejoice that, as human beings, we have been created in your image and likeness. But we also recognise that we alone cannot adequately reflect you. The whole diversity of the earth is needed to give us even a glimpse of your wonder and greatness. Help us to live in a sustainable way so that this marvellous diversity is respected.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation Creator God,

We live in a world where some of us throw out food while others go to bed hungry; where some have modern houses and the latest technology to make life easier and others struggle to find drinking water. May we learn to share with one another and, in this way, come to share in your generosity to all.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation Creator God,

The sun, the wind and the waves are your gift for the flourishing of the whole community of life on earth. Help us to use them creatively to produce sustainable energy for all.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation

Through scientists, engineers and scholars new knowledge comes to light; may new developments in the production of sustainable energy protect our fragile planet and promote the well-being of all peoples and all creatures on their journey to wholeness.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation

We pray for the United Nations, for all international, national and local leaders and for managers of companies that they may be guided by your Spirit to make wise decisions about how the world should move forward so that all can benefit.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation Creator God,

You have blessed humankind with understanding, imagination and memory. Look after those who care for others and often sacrifice themselves for the good of others. Take care of those who are visionaries, ministers of faith and those who show us the way, God's way. Show us how to learn from past mistakes and plan for the future creatively and responsibly.

O God, give us your love for the whole of Creation Creator God,

As our younger members are once again with us we ask for your blessing on them. Indeed on all of us and may we all try their best each and every day to live with God at the forefront of our lives Amen

HYMN Come people of the Risen King

1. Come, people of the Risen King,
Who delight to bring Him praise;
Come all and tune your hearts to sing
To the Morning Star of grace.
From the shifting shadows of the earth
We will lift our eyes to Him,
Where steady arms of mercy reach
To gather children in.

Rejoice, Rejoice!

Let every tongue rejoice!

One heart, one voice;

O Church of Christ, rejoice!

2. Come, those whose joy is morning sun,
And those weeping through the night;
Come, those who tell of battles won,
And those struggling in the fight.

For His perfect love will never change,
And His mercies never cease,
But follow us through all our days
With the certain hope of peace.

3. Come, young and old from every land
Men and women of the faith;
Come, those with full or empty hands
Find the riches of His grace.
Over all the world, His people sing - Shore to shore we hear them call
The Truth that cries through every age:
“Our God is all in all!”

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BENEDICTION

Rejoice that the Lord is King. Serve the Saviour with gladness and love, seek His will in all that you do, confess Him as Lord praising His holy name. Go, knowing the blessing of the Presence of Almighty God at work in your life and through your life today and everyday. Amen