

They shall see His face

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[0 : 00] We bless thy name that we are called this day to the highest activity of which any creature is capable, the worship of the King.

We bless thee that thou hast revealed thyself to us in the Scriptures, so that we come not ignorantly, but in the knowledge that thou art great and greatly to be praised.

The one who breathed out the word, at whose command the earth upon which we live, and the vast universe that is unreachable by human hands or minds, is thy known creative work.

We bless thee, thou art the great artist, the great designer behind the whole of thy works. And as the angels in thy presence worship thee, and the host of redeemed in glory sing thy praise, enable us together here this day to join with them, singing praise to his great and glorious name.

We bless thee that he finished the work that the Father gave him to do, and triumphed gloriously over all his and our enemies.

[1 : 24] That he defeated death, that he defeated death, and broke its bands and sunder, and triumphed over the last enemy death and over the grave, robbing it of its victory.

Guaranteeing for all who trust him, that they too shall overcome death and the grave, and one day also they shall rise, and the heavenly gates shall open to welcome them there.

Guaranteeing for all who trust him, and the heavenly gates shall open to the earth, and the heavenly gates shall open to the earth.

Guaranteeing for all who trust him, and the heavenly gates shall open to the earth. Guaranteeing for all who trust him, and the heavenly gates shall open to the earth. And that soon he will return again, to accomplish and to finalize the redemption of his own, when he shall raise them from the dust of the earth, and give to them new bodies like unto his own.

Guaranteeing for all who trust him, and the heavenly gates shall open to the earth, and the heavenly gates shall open to the earth. Guaranteeing for all who trust him, God, he will return. We bless thee for the regeneration, that universe shall be remade.

[2 : 56] There shall be new heavens, and a new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell. no unclean thing, nothing that defiles shall be permitted to enter there that the earthly paradise in which our first parents were placed that bliss, that new fellowship with heaven in an unbroken fashion that was an inheritance that was incorruptible and undefiled but it faded away we bless thee that the inheritance of the church of Christ is one that will never be tarnished and never be lost and they shall reign with him throughout eternal ages and they shall see his face and his servants shall serve him and there shall be no night there grant us grace, O Lord, while we await that blessed change grant us grace to be up and about the master's business and to count each day a new opportunity to serve him and to honour him and we pray that that might be true concerning each one of us that we might have been brought out of the darkness of nature and brought into the glorious light and liberty of sonship and we pray that we may have been brought to the Lord and we may have been brought to the Lord and given all the privileges that belong to the sons and daughters of the King remember us here, each one with their own particular providence they were taking us along different paths through life's great journey and these have never been promised to be smooth paths many of the waves and the billows that pass over the heads of thy church as it was with the master so it must be with the disciple and today we pray that whatever our providence is whatever turmoil of mind we may be in however difficult our domestic situation may be and however many tears we may shed in secret do thou remind us that these are all well known to thyself indeed hast thou not that precious bottle into which the tears of thy people are placed and we ask of thee O Lord to remind us again from thy word that if we are truly children of the King then our destiny is great and that our light affliction is but for a moment and it shall work for us an exceedingly eternal weight of glory help us to lift our eyes beyond the scene of time that which is

present transient and temporal to that which is eternal therefore lasting that we might see him with renewed eyes today as the one who has conquered and triumphed and who sits upon the throne bless the little ones who are here we thank thee for every child every family and every child and we pray that as the word is sung and read that they might be given that they might be given new understanding and receptive minds and changed hearts and that they might be witnesses for the King in their own day and after the present the older generation of left this scene that they might rise up to become pillars in the church of Christ on earth we remember before thee today

those who are called upon to endure great suffering and hardship and persecution for the sake of Christ remember believers in communist China the underground church in Iraq and Iran in Pakistan and other Muslim countries we bless thee that from where the sun rises this morning to where it sets in the evening Christ's name is being praised and he has a people who do his service and his bidding we pray for their dependents also we remember all who are engaged in mission field activity of various kinds and we pray that they might be blessed and strengthened and given that great vision of the return of the King that the day is already far spent the night is at hand when no man can work help us to join with them then while opportunity and privilege is afforded to us we pray thy blessing upon this congregation upon all its work here and in the community thy blessing upon the minister of the congregation where he is today and as they celebrate the Lord's Supper until he returns as they as the symbols of his brokenness are set before them may they be reminded of the reality and as they taste and see that God is good may they be enabled by grace to renew their vows and to worship him and to serve him pray thy blessing upon our nation largely apostate gracious God turn our captivity we pray and visit us again with showers of blessing provide thy church awaken those who are dead still in trespasses and in sins who see no beauty yet in the King draw them to thyself and open blind eyes remember those who are sick and laid aside with the infirmities and weaknesses of life pray thy blessing especially upon all who love thy name and for whom going up to the house of God is now but a distant memory and although their outward man is perishing may they be renewed in inner strength and given by faith a view of the land of far distances coming closer each day remember those who are eternally ill and ask thy blessing upon all who tend for them to pray that in their final illness they might return to Christ remember also those who have an empty place at home whose present experience is one of bereavement and loss death having robbed them of their loved ones be near to them to comfort and now O Lord help us in our day of opportunity of health and strength to do thy bidding draw near to us as we wait upon thee in worship blessing to us the reading of the word our singing of thy praise and our meditation upon the truth and wash away all our sin for Jesus' sake

I'm always delighted to see young children present and I want to tell you a story before we turn to read God's word together I don't know where you were on your holiday this summer or maybe even just last week but next time you go to a big city make sure that you hold on to your mum's hand and your dad's hand because it's easy to get lost in a big city I know of one little boy who got lost on one occasion and his daddy thought that his mummy he was with his mummy and his mummy thought that he was with his daddy and he wasn't with either of them and when they realised it they went up and down the main street of the city and they couldn't find him but eventually he was found in the police station an old lady had discovered him wandering on his own and had taken him into the police station and there he was sobbing his heart out in the police station so it's easy to get lost in a big city but also in any large city we associate bad things or crime and I want to tell you the story of a man whom I met just a few weeks ago in one of the big cities of our world and this city is called Belgrade far away from here and when I met Tosjak he was outside the British church along with other young people painting the railings one beautiful evening and I quickly learned that he could speak English and made conversation with Tosjak and I discovered that Tosjak this young man was brought up in a Christian home his mother was a widow his father died while he was young and so he was well taught from the Bible he knew the scriptures but Tosjak lived in this big city called Belgrade and when he was a teenager he got into trouble and you know there are gangs formed in big cities and they robbed one that was his life one of stealing and robbing but the inevitable happened and he was caught by the police and he was imprisoned he was put in jail and he was telling me that one night in his cell he went on his knees and he prayed he remembered the prayers that his mother had taught him and he went on his knees and he prayed that God would change his life and if he would if God would change his life then he would serve him well that's what happened

Tosjak's life was changed he had to serve a sentence he got out of prison and he kept his promise and he went to Bible school to a theological college for two years and he learned a lot about the Bible so what does he do now well he's a baker at ten o'clock at night I met him about nine o'clock in the evening and he said I'm just getting ready to go home to get washed and to get ready to go down to the bakery and all night long I'll be baking bread and I'll get a few hours sleep and then I'll start preaching the gospel he's a baker and a preacher of the gospel you see when he came to his senses when he realised that he was lost and done done he asked God to change his life and God came into his heart and Tosjak is now a baker and a preacher of the gospel and I want you to remember the story of Tosjak so that these warnings of living a life away from the Lord Jesus so that when you grow up and leave home and go to the big city it won't be to begin a life of crime but of following Jesus and do that today and in the words of

Christina Rossetti who composed this hymn I'll just quote this part of it she said what shall I give him small as I am if I were a shepherd I would give him a lamb if I were a rich man I would play my part but what can I give him I will give him my heart and that's what he asks of every boy and girl and every man and woman that we give him our heart we'll turn again to the chapter that we read together Revelation and the last chapter and words that we find in the third and fourth verses and there shall be no more curse but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and his servants shall serve him and they shall see his face and his name shall be in their foreheads

[16:20] I mentioned in my talk to the children that just a few weeks ago I was in Belgrade in Serbia and I met the man who was to accompany me I met him at Heathrow for the first time till then we were complete strangers and we made our way to the departure lounge Heathrow's place bustling with activity people going in all directions each heading for their own particular gate departure gate and in the throne there was this young lady standing very attractive young lady and she said these words and they tripped my mind she said would you like to try eternity would you like to try eternity now clearly she was offering samples of a perfume and people were passing by maybe some stopped but we too much too much of a time our text this day is replete and this book is full of eternity and we are passing by but we have no option with regard to eternity each day brings us that much closer would you like to try eternity eternity the man who penned this book was none other than the beloved apostle

John he started out his life as a fisherman along with his brother James they knew exactly where to set their nets on Lake Galilee but one day John heard a call and he was in the big boat mending the nets and he left his nets and he followed the master and he became a fisher of men it was this same John who saw his master transfigured on Mount Hermon he had the privilege along with Peter and James of being present and they saw the Lord in the glory of his divinity and his face and his clothes shone John was there John was also present on the memorable night on which Jesus was betrayed

John was one of those in the upper room when the master took the towel and the basin and proceeded to wash the feet of his disciples exactly what was he doing he was assuming the position of a slave that was the lowest of all activities that a slave could engage in washing hot dusty dirty smelly feet and that's what the master did the night a few short hours before he was betrayed and John was present there leaning on the master's bosom and John was also present the next day at Golgotha when he heard the words uttered from the cross and he heard the master saying to John look after my mother here is now the same

John an old man some reckon that he's about 90 years of age and he's on the prison isle of Patmos off the coast of Turkey Patmos is perhaps the size of Point an inhospitable place where prisoners were sent but why is John there what are his crimes what are just there he was there for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ the authorities had two options either John could be beheaded but in which case he would become a martyr and they chose the other kush let him become a prisoner and here he is an old man with a sledgehammer breaking stones along with a chain gang of other prisoners he slept on the cold damp floor of one of the caves in Patmos I wondered if he recalled some of the scriptures that he himself had been privileged to pen I wonder if it came back to his mind the words that he wrote in what we have as the 13th chapter of John's Gospel you know not said Jesus when he asked him when Peter said you'll never wash my feet and Jesus said to them you don't understand what I'm doing now but you will understand afterwards I wonder if John recollected writing these words and maybe it's something like that with you this day your providence is perplexing in the extreme and you're asking the question why well

from this very room a few years ago on a communion sabbath morning

[22 : 54] I recall an illustration given by Reverend Kenneth MacDonald ex-Ros King when he was talking about the difficulties that the church of Christ and the individual believer faces and his illustration was this someone wandered into into a place into the sculpture's yard and the sculpture was setting about his work and there was a block of marble and he was there with his mallet and his chisel and the visitor said what are you going to make of this block of marble well he said I'm going to make a horse and how will you do that well he said I'll take my tools and I'll chip away everything that doesn't look like a horse and that's what the Lord is doing with his people chipping away and conforming them to the nature of Christ until one day they shall be like the master and when that day dawns they will not be found here they'll be with himself

I recall reading many years ago from the book the men of Lewis the story of one of the Gaelic school teachers I came across to teacher for to read Kenneth Ross was his name and Ross had a very difficult domestic life apparently and he came to his death bed and someone said to him what now to which he answered well I am persuaded that in glory in heaven I'll bless God more for the bitter experiences in my life than for the sweet how can you say that they said to him well he said I proved that through the bitter things in my cup I was drawn closer to the Lord than when things were going well let no one tell us that being a

Christian and following the Christian path is easy far from it the Christian life is the most difficult life that anyone can live but it's the most rewarding and it's the most fulfilling and the best is yet to be so here is John the old disciple he had seen and he had heard much but he is to see and to hear much more because on this particular Lord's Day morning we read that John was in the spirit and the curtains were pulled aside and John got a glimpse of the glory that awaits John got a view into the history and the destiny of the nations and what

John saw he recorded for us in the book of Revelation it's a very difficult book to interpret and to understand but it's an exciting book it's futuristic it speaks about things yet to happen and when you start reading it you're gripped by its message certainly there are things that we cannot understand but it isn't all about the future the essence of what John has to say is often in the here and now in the present for example at the start of this last section chapter 22 we read that John saw a pure river of the water of life that flowed from the throne of God and of the lamb what is that river well it's a river that's been flowing for two thousand years it's the river of the gospel it's the good news that Jesus

Christ came into the world to save to redeem and to restore and there was a tree that John saw the tree of life and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations if there's no gospel there's no healing and there's no recovery and the gospel has that effect on human life it transforms and it heals and it gives hope and every time that the gospel is read or proclaimed this river the river of God's grace flows have you tasted of it David when he penned the words oh taste and see that God is good who trusts in him is blessed David great sinner though he was had tasted of God's goodness and God's grace and as for sinners that Christ came the gospel has no meaning no relevance whatever to those who think that they are upright and righteous and will make it there in the end by their own achievements but here

[29 : 03] John is taken to the very source of the river and the source is none other than the throne of God and of the Lamb and then John pens the words that are before us where he says and there shall be no more curse curse no more what is the curse and when did it when and where did it originate well the framers of the shorter catechism put it very concisely when they said this all mankind by the fall lost communion with God are under his wrath and curse and so made liable and so on to all the mysteries of this life and they framed it in such a way as to put across the clear teaching that the curse is not something future the curse is a present experience it's a present reality the earth was cursed and Paul tells us in the great chapter the 8th chapter of the

Romans that the whole creation groans in pain and travail we have our earthquakes we have our plate movements we have our thorns and our thistles evidences of the curse and that day man lost his fellowship with his maker and he knew bitterly the cost of separation and the cost of defiance and that's so to the very present and to the end of time now if you were hearing this story this message for the very first time you heard the words I am under the curse inevitably as a result of the transgression and the disobedience of my forebears all the way back to my first parents I am under the curse what question would arise in your mind logically hearing this for the first time this dark somber gloomy truth I am under the curse that is set aside for destruction devoted to

destruction well surely the question would be this how can I escape if the curse has fallen and it's on my head now how can I escape what must I do to avoid the curse or to have the curse lifted from over my life and if you are to hear this answer you don't have to do anything the curse has been lifted by someone else on your behalf you would say tell me more who lifted the curse and what guarantee have I got that I am no longer under the curse tell me more about this good news rather than being set aside for destruction

I am promised life in all its fullness how come what we read in Paul's letter to the Galatians that Christ we read these words Christ was made a curse for us Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law having been made a curse for us these are glorious words and we would do well to ponder them and to meditate much upon them Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law now when the verse when John says there shall be no more curse but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it he sets these two in antithesis one against the other on the one hand he's speaking about the curse on the other hand he's speaking about the throne of God and of the Lamb it's a neither or it's one or the other and we'll come back to that so how did Christ remove the curse John was present when he saw him at Golgotha crowned with thorns the symbol of shame the symbol of the curse and he was there a spectacle between heaven and earth the derision of men mocked and spat upon and there he was enduring the curse intensively and he knew to his cost what it was to be abandoned and forsaken by his father God cannot look upon sin and at that moment

[35 : 02] Christ was made sin the one who knew no sin was made sin for us he was bearing the wrath and the curse of God against sin and from the sixth hour to the ninth hour even the natural sun hid its light while the son of God endured the curse coming back to the soul applying this to the believer to the believing soul the soul that is under the curse when is that curse removed the moment that the soul closes in with Christ in the terms of the gospel at that moment the curse is removed and when the curse is removed this also happens the throne of God and of the Lamb is now on that heart or in that heart in that soul what's meant by the throne of God and of the Lamb well just this the authority of God the love of God the precepts of God

God's right to be settled upon the throne of the human heart that's why our first parents were made they were made in this image to bring honour and glory to his name and there was no rival to that throne in paradise in the Edenic paradise and the throne of God and of the Lamb was a present daily experience there was no curse but the moment that the curse descended God removed himself there was now someone else on the throne of the human heart and so it is to this very day with our servants now when the throne of God when the sovereignty of God operates in the human heart another something else happens a new yoke is taken upon the soul prior to this there's the burden of sin and slavery now there's a new master upon the soul and his yoke is easy and his burden is light and what follows well it's inevitable and his servants shall serve him no longer are they the slaves of sin under condemnation by the law they have been set free and perfect freedom is discovered in service to

Christ if the son makes us free wrote John we are free indeed until that moment we are slaves and his servants notice it says and his servants shall serve him now that's it doesn't say his servants will serve him that's simple future but there's determination involved here his servants shall serve him in other words there is no possibility of them not serving it's a logical extension to their freedom and to the curse being removed they shall serve him and how do they serve him when on his terms not every service is acceptable in God's sight it's service on the master's terms remember and again I'm quoting a lot from John the beloved apostle remember the feeding of the five thousand they came and they were fed and then they came again and Jesus said to them you seek me not because of the miracles but because of the loaves what you're interested in in other words is your belly what you're really interested in is self service not my service and then he said this to them labor not for the food that perishes don't give yourself over to just amassing and acquiring what this present world has to offer you labor not for the food that perishes but for that which endures to life everlasting the bread of life and they said to him this is a great question what shall we do that we might work the works of

God what do you want us to do then how do you want us to serve you and he answers it this is the work of God that you believe on him whom he has sent reveals himself there there there there is evidence for faith how recall also this is from Matthew's gospel on the last great day when the son of man will come in his glory and in the glory of the angels with the angels he will separate the

sheep from the goats and he will put the sheep to his right side and the goats to the left and then he will say to them come you blessed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you and so on when

[41 : 49] I was hungry you fed me when I was thirsty you gave me drink when I was naked and in prison and sick and so on you did this and you did that and you did the next thing for me in other words you served me but they will say to him but when did we see you sick and hungry and naked and cold and in prison and he will say to them in as much as you did it unto one of the least of these of my brethren you have done it unto me Christ is no longer present so how can we serve them only in this way by serving his people service to them done to them in his name is service to Christ service and faith ought to show it's not just it's not an intellectual faith certainly the intellect is involved but it's a faith that works itself out in daily life in daily practice and there shall be no more curse and his servants shall serve him but if more and they shall see his face now surely this is the climax this is the ultimate of salvation they are being prepared to inhabit that celestial city and they shall see his face

John saw his face John often saw the master's face he saw the tears streaming down the master's face he saw the agony on the master's face in Gethsemane when the cup was presented to his mind for the first time and willingly he took it and he saw his face as he was suspended on the cross and he saw his face when he was transfigured on Mount Hermon but the face that John now sees is altogether different it's the face of the risen Lord no man can see God and live for in God there is God is light and in him is no darkness at all as the principle of our cottage puts it in God there is no un-Christ-likeness at all and Jesus on one occasion said those who have seen me have seen the Father and they shall see his face and the second time it will not be a time of shame and humiliation and of sin that Jesus would come but he will come in the glory of his Father and with the angels it will be the face of the judge the judge whose gaze penetrates every human heart the judge before whom there is no court of appeal his scrutiny is such that he misses nothing we judge by outward acts and outward appearances but his judgment is altogether different his judgment is spiritual the law said Paul on one occasion the law is carnal is to do with the outside so he thought in his unregenerate state but when he realized that the law has got a spiritual dimension to it at that moment it slew him it left him defenseless and that's what a glimpse of the law does when our eyes are opened to recognize that this law that is the index to God's own character condemns us and they shall see his face but there is more still and his name shall be in their forests his name shall be in their forests they serve him here and they will serve him hereafter now what would you say if someone did not serve him here what conclusion would you come to what surely this if we don't serve him here the curse is still upon us remember it's a neither or if we serve him from the heart the curse has been removed therefore if we don't serve him we are still under the curse now that's exceedingly solemn but it's the teaching of scripture and they shall see his face and his name shall be in their forests there's going to be another name in other forests and it's not going to be the saviour's name and it won't be the saviour's face and John in the revelation has much to speak about the beast and the mark of the beast without any doubt there are two camps here and certainly there will be two camps there no doubt our preference each one would be to serve the lamb and not to serve the beast it's not always easy here to see and to recognise those who are his those who serve him but on that day it will be unmistakably clear his servants shall serve him they shall see his face and his name shall be in their forests what a blessed gospel and what a precious saviour and the saviour is passing by in the gospel today again she said would you like to try eternity and they passed by and what she had the commodity that she had on offer was a perfume a fragrance that would last a few short hours the title of her commodities is a miss no more only the fragrance of Christ will last forever his name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall wouldn't it be good if every man and woman and every boy and girl under this roof and within these walls had that great longing and assurance in their own heart that they serve the king and that one day they will see him as he is and wonder of wonders they shall be like him there is no journey as exciting as the journey of the Christian life

I did say the beginning was a difficult one full of challenge indeed so but it is one that is rich in every conceivable way and in eternity the land will lead them to the throne of Godhead they will explore the Godhead and that exploration will never cease it's an endless journey of excitement they already are partakers of the divine nature but it's the throne of God and of the Lamb and this is the beauty is it not that today the Lamb is on the throne in our nature and he knows exactly the

questions in your heart and all that disturbs you take them to him and leave them with him may he bless to us these few thoughts let us pray we bless thy name for the love that had no origin for the gospel that was conceived in the mind and heart of

God for the word that became flesh and dwelt among us and John could say we beheld his glory the glory as of the only begotten of the father full of grace and full of truth we ask oh lord that for each one of us that grace would find us today casting ourselves upon the mercies of a covenant keeping God bless us each one and do for us far beyond what we can ask or even think and prepare us for that day when sight when faith shall give way to sight and we shall see him as he is and be like it accept our thanks for thy goodness to us thus far and wash away all our sin for Jesus sake amen those in praise is psalm 72 and the last three verses of the psalm his name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in him and blessed all nations shall him call these three verses his name forever shall endure you