I am the Alpha and Omega

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Preacher: Rev John Angus Gillies

[0:00] May I direct your thoughts to the 22nd chapter in the book of Revelation and to verse 3, the third verse.

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.
Now particularly the last part of this verse, his servants shall serve him. We all know the purpose for the writing of this letter and the circumstances in which John received this revelation.
We cannot but think that at the time that he received it, that probably he was very downcast.
He was separated from the mainland church and quite possibly he had to submit to forced labor.
[1:27] And the picture in the church was not that encouraging. And particularly in the light of the seven letters, we may be well aware that John also had his own troubled thoughts as he reflected upon the circumstances of his time.

To ourselves it seems unthinkable and unbelievable that so soon, after the ministry of the apostles, which was in demonstration of the power of the Spirit, that such corruption should have been in evidence within the church.
And yet, within the church, there was Christ. And it is in these circumstances that John is brought into that wonderful experience, described for us as being in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.
And from there, he was taken to look at things in a different perception to what he was accustomed to look at.
He was seeing the things that seemed to be leading to chaos in heaven.
[3:12] It was seen there by the inhabitants as occasion upon occasion for glorifying their Redeemer and praising the wisdom of God.

Now here we come to the last chapter. And in this particular verse, we are reminded that when the curse is totally removed, then service will be the privilege of the redeemed.
His servants shall serve him. Now there are three ways that perhaps we might look at this service for a little while. This evening.
First of all, created to serve. Again, resentment in service.
And last of all, free to serve. If we look then, first of all, at the aspect of the workmanship of God, where man, the pinnacle of his workmanship, is created to serve.
[4:45] And we think of this service in terms of all the opportunities that were presented to man in order to appreciate, in order to appreciate, to draw from the inexhaustible resources of divinity in order to enjoy the condition in which they were created.

created. And we see in these circumstances that something happened which comes to man through other created spirits.
And we see that the prompting to move away from service to lordship comes from fallen spirits.
Now, when we look at what the Bible has to tell us about this rebellion in the angelic world, we are told that the offence was that Satan, the arch-enemy, abode not in the truth.
That is how it is described for us. And Paul speaks of pride or being lifted up with pride as the condemnation of the devil.
[6:26] so that when we try to look into the situation, we see that the angelic spirits were also created to serve.

But somehow in that service only the elect angels continue to serve. Now, I think it is important for us not to attempt to gloss over the fact that the elect angels continued to serve.
For we must not allow ourselves for the convenience of our limited understanding of things to look upon the entrance of sin and of rebellion as something that was totally unforeseen.

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We must not think for one moment that this condition caught the most high unawares and that suddenly we find ourselves in a continuing situation where effort upon desperate effort is made to correct or at least to salvage where that is possible what remains of a world totally chaotic.
that is how it appears to us but we have to believe where we cannot understand and what is important in this matter of being created to serve that for reasons that lie beyond our ability to interpret the elect angels continue to serve and other spirits rebelled against God and the reason why they would not continue was that they did not consider that their position justified the place of service to which they were committed.
[9:06] Now we also see in the fact that these fallen spirits rebelled the liability to sin and we see very clearly when we turn to man and his reaction we see also this liability to sin.

Obviously there was resentment and when we see the desperate enmity in the heart of fallen spirits and in the hearts of fallen man there ought not to be a trace of doubt in our thoughts with respect to the reality of what the word of God teaches.
Now there are some people and they react strongly to the suggestion that they are at enmity with God.
they say that they are not committed in the way that others are but they have no axe to grind but either they are true or the Bible is false or else the Bible is true and they are false.
And you will always find the measure of man's hostility when it comes to submitting to the will of God. And we find it particularly in the resentment that is felt towards the Lord Jesus Christ as to the time he himself tells us he will come to judge the world.
[11:04] He will separate people and people as a shepherd in the eastern world would separate the sheep from the goats. He will reward those on his right hand and to those on his left he will say depart from me ye cursed into the place prepared for the devil and for his angels.

now that kind of biblical information is very much unacceptable except to those who have learned the great truth that Abraham learned as he waited for the destruction of the cities of the plain. Remember when he was pleading that these cities should be spared and he closed his argument to God with the words shall not the judge of all the earth do right.
Well then this resentment is reflected in the enmity of the fallen spirits and we see that presented to us very graphically by the evangelists recorded for us in the gospels and we see it in our own day and perhaps the saddest feature of that rebellion is that Christ is wounded in the house of his friends and perhaps nowhere else has blasphemy expressed itself in its most blatant form than from pulpits speaking in the name of Christ.
Now I would not like that yourselves or myself should look away from ourselves and condemn people other people.
[13:25] What we have to remember is that the seed of that enmity is in my heart. It is in your heart. It may be that there is a providence which God has seen proper that we should experience and we complain about that providence.

We become discontented. We react out of character and in some way or another we show that unbelief is known at our very relationship to God and instead of recognizing that what is good the Lord will give we question the goodness and the kindness especially when it hurts.
well then we see in the scriptures that service by the fallen angels and service by man angels and man created to serve ends up in resentment towards God and absolute rebellion against him.
Now it is against that sombre background that again we come face to face to God and it is wonderful that as soon as man rebelled but the promise of God immediately comes to the forefront that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.
And in the fullness of time we are taken to Bethlehem where we witness one of the great promises promised to the fathers and the fulfillment that to us our son is born.
[15:50] And we see in the development of this the son of God Jesus the saviour we see in his development service in its most beautiful form.

now Christ was called the servant he is referred to as the suffering servant and we see him coming into the situation where he himself takes the place of Israel he is the true Israel and he is there to express himself under the yoke where identifying with the condition the tragic condition of his people he comes to serve.
Let us look for a little at that service its nature and its conditions and works. Now the service first of all was undertaken for others.

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Christ did not come to this world to show us what he could do to enhance his own reputation to focus attention upon himself.
It was entirely a service to which he was directed by his own father. It was the will of God the father that God the son in the fullness of time should come.
[17:52] And he was to serve and that service was to be undertaken for others. He was to fulfill their obligations.

He was to meet their liabilities. He was to be their substitute. And through it all he is meek, he is gentle, uncomplaining and throughout his life there is an unshaken commitment and loyalty to the will of his father.
Again and again he is disinterested except in terms of doing what his father commanded him to do. It is a self sacrificing service where he tells us that he and his father are one.
And again he says my meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me. It was also a real and an actual service.
[19:10] it was costly to the Lord Jesus Christ. There was privation, there was toil, there was shame, there was pain.

He was exposed to cold hunger, thirst and the temptations of evil spirits. The reproach and the violence of evil men fell upon him.
And throughout it all he simply served. He did not resent the contempt that was heaped upon him, the way that deliberately he was misrepresented, he was slighted.
Not once does he complain that the way is too rough, but the way is impossible. And we see him acting holy for God and leaving all to God.
You remember the case of the temptation when Christ, when the devil came to him and after 40 days when he was hungry, ready to die, how it was suggested to him that if he was indeed the son of God to command the stones to be made bread, but he would not take bread unlawfully.
[21:00] He referred to the great privilege of serving and he made it very clear that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

What a contrast to ourselves. How often we stretch our grubby hands to get whatever we can by way of honour, by way of possession, by way of distinction, by way of recognition.
How different to our wonderful Saviour. And looking at it he himself was appalled and we see and we tried to look at aspects of that yesterday how the ultimate demands led him into the experience of being forsaken.
yet in the midst of all that was happening we see that he is adamant not my will but thy will be done and when ultimately he said that it is finished it was following upon the commitment of his spirit into the hands of his father.
Well now when we think of this service we turn to the situation that is put before us that they who are saved are free to serve and service is a response is the response to the goodness and to the kindness of God.
[23:21] I think it could be said that worship is service. You will recall certain incidents in the scriptures such as when Abraham's servant was sent for a wife for Isaac how the servant put before God certain things that if they were to fall out according to a certain order that he would take it as his guidance and when the things fell out exactly as the servant had indicated his immediate response was to worship.

You remember the case of Nehemiah when the news came to him that Jerusalem was still in ruins that the work of rebuilding was not going on and how he was so upset that when he went into the king's presence for he was this cupbearer that he was sad and the king asked him why was he sad Nehemiah explained and the king asked him what was his request and the first thing that Nehemiah in spirit did he prayed to the Lord his God he was responding to a situation in which he looked to God for the favour and the goodwill that would enable him to present his case to the king service is a matter of dependence we were created to serve because it is in our dependence upon
God that we fulfilled the function of our creation and we have to remember that as we serve it is not something that is done where we are pushed to the limit of our endurance what is promised as thy day so shall thy strength be no man is sent to any task at his own expense or dependent upon his own strength and we see time and time again the great men of scripture recognizing how wonderfully they were upheld how they were prospered how they were enabled to accomplish whatever

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God in his mercy enabled them to accomplish if you look at the record of King David's life and it was in many respects an outstanding life he is described as a man according to God's own heart and yet in all his achievement I think it is true to say that nowhere at least as much as I am aware nowhere is there a whisper of boastfulness when he was enabled to fight successfully the battles of the Lord he is extremely careful to put it on record that what was achieved was not the result of human courage or human perseverance or human achievement but that it was
God working through human instrumentality and that he alone was the one that deserved to be mentioned in the great victories that were won if you turn to the apostle Paul I think you can say the same thing about him he was extremely erudite a man of tremendous achievement a person who was high born a person who had advantages above most of his fellows in his own day but what does he say as he preaches Christ does he tell us in philosophic terms how with great academic distinction he could present his case no he doesn't tell us that at all he tells us that for him to live is [29:01] Christ I count all things but done that I may win Christ and he specifically says that he did not come with the enticing words of man's wisdom but his dependence was upon the spirit who alone was able to raise to life again it's a beautiful thing God is the God of love love is self giving and where there is self giving the response is to serve it is through the wonderful power of God that man is enabled to explore the universe of God and enter into experiences which grow nobler and higher and more wonderful as one continues now here we are told his servants shall serve it is a wonderful thing to serve

God God I'm sure since you come into this building this night but many times you will reflect upon things that flitted across your mind things that interfere with the wholesome and free outpouring of your heart in gratitude to God at least I know that I am guilty of such things and we know that our prayers whatever they may sound like must be followed by the petition that God would have mercy upon us our prayers are not clean except as they enter the golden censor except as they become the activation of the intercession of Christ there is no prayer that is a prayer except the prayer that comes from the intercession of Christ and when we try to preach those of us who do preach what a mixture we are you would think that the preacher above all persons would be quite clean in his desire that Christ should have the preeminence in everything that he says and does but a thousand and one things interfere with righteousness of spirit and after we have said what we have to say we then join company with the tax gatherer of old and beat upon our breasts
Lord be merciful to me a sinner have you ever sat by the bedside of a dying saint and have you ever heard the person say I did this or I did that in the service of the Lord and because of what I have done I have confidence as now I go to meet my maker the experience is entirely the other way it is not our prayer it is not our reading of the scripture it is not our attendance upon diets of worship and these are proper and good in their own places Christ is the only saviour and to him be glory world without end but the day will come my dear friends the day will come when if we are his children we shall be able to serve him this is the promise the response to the
God who never has done us any wrong who will not do us any wrong the God who as Jacob expressed it fed us all the days of our lives the God who has provided for ourselves for our dependence who has done for us so wonderfully we shall be able to respond and to respond in the highest form of service let me close with a reference to Christ in the upper room it is a very beautiful scene where we see God manifest in the flesh taken up with concern and desire for the well-being not only of the disciples in that room but for the creation of God we see him suddenly rising up what is he going to do the disciples draw their breath sharply surely not yes they know that there is there the basin of water the town and the service that was customary done towards guests that it was still undone and to their horror they see our
Lord moving over to the basin taking the town and beginning to wash the disciples feet what was the response first of all to the will of his father my meat and my drink is to do the will of my father and that involved the pouring forth of divinity in an action where these disciples are taught an example that they would never forget you remember how Christ said the princes of this world exercise larger we always inclined to think that if you are going to do something menial that it is perhaps below us somebody else should do that sort of thing we should do the glamorous things the things where people will praise us and how often we see a class division arising simply because man wants to be the top dog he wants others fawning and scraping before him and serving him in the ways that he considers he is worthy to be served

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[37:04] Christ said to the disciples you won't be like that you won't be like that but he that is greatest among you he will serve am I not with you am I not among you as the greatest and here I serve it was a wonderful service an ennobling of service it was the freedom of service it was such a pleasure for the Lord to do what he did because it was the will of his father and the will of the father stretched out in love according to the purpose of his own will whatever it will be at the end of the day we often come to our own morbid conclusions as to what will be at the end of the day perhaps it is wiser for us to wait for that day than to speculate one thing we do know that the attributes of

God combine in a holy unison expressing all that will reflect the greatness and the goodness of God throughout the endless ages of eternity and what of our service after communion service what is the message to us well it would be wonderful if you and I would receive a little capacity to serve to be contented to serve wherever God has placed us to take the basin of water and the towel to wash others feet if that is the will of God for us to do that is the service of love the response to the great out going of the love of
God it's a wonderful thing and when you begin to think of it little wonder heaven shall be such a happy place little wonder that we are told that in that place God will have wiped away all tears from his people's eyes the great harmony of creation will be seen for what actually is but it was Christ in his mercy that worked out for us this great deliverance whereby his people shall attain to their eternal rest love love what a friend we have in Jesus so sang the hymn writer or to use the words of the psalmist oh taste and see that
God is good who trusts in him is blessed let us pray gracious and ever blessed one give us grace to serve thee and in that service enable us to reflect the Christ like spirit we thank thee for thy forbearance with us over the weekend and as now we separate and as we go to our several homes stay with those who stay go with those who go we ask it in Jesus name amen

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