

## Service Transcript Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Welcome to this morning's service from Maidstone Road Baptist Church. We are blessed to be able to live in an area where we can enjoy God's creation. Later in the service, Andrew is going to talk about our relationship to creation and to God, both present and future.

But as God's people on Christ, we also celebrate the personal relationship we have with Him because of the death and resurrection of His Son, the Lord, Jesus Christ. He's our exalted King. Let's proclaim Him now in these opening words.

*Sing to the Lord a new song. Praise God in the assembly of the faithful.*

**Let all God's children rejoice in their King.**

*Rejoice in our God! Give glory to His holy name.*

**Praise the Lord! Sing to Him a new song.**

***All hail the power of Jesus' name***

Lord Jesus, thank you that you have been raised to life, and in Your death and resurrection, you raise us up to new life, bringing hope into our lives on Earth and for eternity. We give You glory. Amen.

***You are the sovereign I am***

If you've been following these services over the last couple of weeks, then you'll know that we shall be involved in Thy Kingdom Come again this year. It's the season of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost (21<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> May) when we remember those who God has placed on our hearts, that they may turn to Jesus and become His disciples too. In Thy Kingdom Come we pray for five people come to Jesus and decide to follow Him. How is God calling you to pray for.

Prayer changes things, it changes people. Do you believe in prayer? Do you really believe that prayer can make a difference.

God wants to move in the lives of people now, bringing hope and purpose that only comes through following Jesus. There can be a time no more apt than this, when as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, that men and women are starting to ask themselves the most fundamental questions about life and death, and are starting look at prayer and seeking God in a new way. Let's pray that God will work in the lives of those we know who need Him, and show us how we can show through our actions and our words how He is working in our lives.

In the 10 days of Thy Kingdom Come, we are going to have an Ascension Service on 21<sup>st</sup> May and then daily prayers at Noon each day, except Sunday 24<sup>th</sup>, until Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May and a special Pentecost Service on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup>. (We will send a transcripts and notes to those who normally get Sunday Service transcripts.)

***The UK Blessing***

**Prayers**

Our Father We remember those who have been recently bereaved, whether through covid-19 or other reasons. Father comfort the families through their loss and give them strength to deal with emotions that arise from it. Be close to them we pray.

We pray too as a church preparing for Thy Kingdom Come, that you will give us a vision for what you can do in the lives of those we know who don't yet know you. Encourage us and prompt us to pray daily for them that you will bring your hope into their lives.

We pray for those we know are isolated, that they may be encouraged by phone calls and letters they receive, and that they may continue to receive the assistance that they need. Help us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to them.

God of grace  
Bring Your hope

Let's pray too for our nation

Father God, we lift our nation before you today at this time of crisis. We lift the Government before you, that they make wise decisions, that will save lives and begin to ease the pressure that lockdown has on people's lives. We thank you for the dedication of health staff in hospitals as they work to save lives, for carers and essential staff as they keep people safe and ensure that essential services are maintained and also for the many who have volunteered to bring assistance to those isolated.

Be with all these people we pray.

God of grace,  
Bring Your hope

And may Jesus have the glory.

Amen.

### ***Just one touch from the King***

#### **Romans 8:18-25 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

<sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

#### **Sermon: What are we waiting for?**

I don't know if that passage is an encouragement to you at this difficult time. Romans 8 is one of the great chapters in the Bible, and I want to look at just a few of the verses today.

The word 'creation' is mentioned four times. I talked about creation a couple of weeks back, and how we need to look after it. One of the positives for me during the present crisis has been my daily walks in the countryside, especially at this time of year. You just have to marvel at God's creation.

*Picture of a bluebell wood in Trimley.*

*Picture of goslings on Loompit Lake.* I can walk to this from home, an AONB. Here, on the same day I took this photo, there were ducklings, common terns, house martins and loads of songbirds in the bushes. Including nightingales!

*Picture of heron.* One of my favourite birds, but not popular if you have a fishpond. Herons eat anything - fish, frogs, smaller birds - even moles! I watched one eat an eel not long back.

We think of nature as idyllic, but most of the creatures out there are eating each other. Wading birds with specialised shaped bills to catch different invertebrates. Picture of curlew. Picture of avocet. Nature, said the poet Tennyson is not based on the law of love:

Who trusted God was love indeed  
And love Creation's final law  
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw  
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed.

He was challenged by the discovery of 'the survival of the fittest', the doctrine expounded by Darwin. Weaker creatures perish, there are tigers as well as lambs. Only a few years earlier, Romantic poets such as Wordsworth were going on about daffodils and rainbows, proclaiming 'natural piety' as an ideal, but is nature really so benign?

The Bible is more realistic. In the passage we are looking at, it talks of creation being 'subjected to frustration', of it being in bondage. To equate nature and God is bad theology (whatever Wordsworth thought). Charles Wesley had it right when he wrote of us being 'fast bound in sin and nature's night'. Nature's **night**. Have you ever stopped and thought about the words we often sing? Nature is fallen, affected by sin and the devil. When did it all go wrong? There was death before Adam and Eve sinned - dinosaurs terrorised the earth millennia ago. They've now evolved into birds (such as herons). Evil, according to Scripture, is far greater than human sin, and can be traced back to the devil. Jesus called him 'the Prince of this world', but also said he had seen him thrown out of heaven:

**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven** (Luke 10:18)

In Revelation 12, we hear more about this:

**Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.** *Rev. 12:7-9*

We are told in 1 John 3:8 that "**the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work**".

Some of the things we find in nature (such as the coronavirus) are the work of the enemy. "**An enemy has done this**" says the farmer in Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matt.13: 24-28).

Some people have been blaming God for creating nasty viruses, but God hates disease and death as much as we do. We must not link God and Nature too closely. "Mother Nature" lacks morality, but God is holy and caring. He said that creation was good, when he made it, but it is now "subjected to frustration".

One lesson to draw from this is that we cannot derive our morality from nature. It's not sufficient to argue "it's natural" in order to justify homosexuality. People are born with all sorts of conditions that we cannot argue are good. However, they may need more love and care because of this.

You could argue that adultery is natural: male animals compete to have the most offspring. Stags rutting (*e.g. on Westleton Heath - see picture*). Ensures that the toughest animals contribute most to the gene pool. Good for evolution, but we rightly say it would be destructive in human relationships.

Just as we say that political systems (such as Fascism) that promote a master race and try to eradicate other races are morally wrong. No, nature cannot be our guide. Wordsworth was wrong when he said that

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach us more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

The worship of nature leads to all kinds of problems, as Paul expounds in Romans 1. But that's another sermon!

So nature is in bondage, to return to our passage in Romans 8. Will it always be like this? No, says Paul:

**Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us** (v. 18)

**The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.** (v. 19)

**The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God** (v. 21)

Notice that the word **hope** comes six times in this short passage. That's the key.

What is our hope?

**Our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies** (v. 23)

This is the great promise of the NT. Not just Paul, but John:

**Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.** (1 John 3:2)

We will have a new resurrection body, just as Jesus did. That is what the apostles taught.

**For in this hope we were saved** (Romans 8:24)

It's not about going to heaven when we die; it's about a future resurrection.

**And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.** (*Romans 8:11*)

Meanwhile we (like nature) groan.

**The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.**

**Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait** (vv 22, 23)

Paul uses an interesting image. Childbirth. It has been said that we are attached to Mother Earth by a placenta. We share our bodies with the rest of the biosphere: the carbon, water, calcium etc that makes up our bodies is only borrowed. A child, after it is born, does not need the placenta. And one day we will not need the biosphere. We will be more fully alive.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul uses another image, that of the seed that dies so that a new plant can emerge.

**So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable.** (1 Cor.15: 42).

The new body is more glorious than the old. The oak tree is greater than the acorn.  
**Just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.** (1 Cor. 15:49)

Or, as John puts it, we will be like Jesus. That's what adoption as God's sons means.  
**We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.** *Hebrews 6:19*

And nature will also be redeemed. "**We wait for it patiently**" (Romans 8:25)  
To be more precise, we wait for him patiently. It's about Jesus. His return.  
**Christ... the hope of glory** *Colossians 1:27*

It's what we are all waiting for.

***He has risen***

### **Closing Prayer & Blessing**

Father, as we look at this world, we know that you created it as good, but down the ages it has become damaged and diminished by sin. We see a fallen human race and all the consequences that it has brought to creation. Yet we thank you that Jesus has died and He is risen and glorified and through his finished work, through faith we have found a hope that stretched through life and into eternity. Whereas we see the promises that one day Jesus will return and we will be all changed into His likeness, help us and mould us into the people we need to be now in order to bring Good News to this generation and extend your kingdom. We ask this in Jesus' name

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

### **For reflection and discussion**

Read Romans 8:18-25

1. Bearing mind that there is much in nature that's "dog eat dog," why do you think the idea developed that nature is full of "natural morality?"
2. How does the passage show the difference between what creation is like now and what it will be when Christ returns?
3. Why do you think it was so important to Paul and to us that there will one day be a resurrection of all who die in Christ?
4. That being the case, how do passages like this (and the others mentioned in Andrew's sermon) affect the way in which we communicate Christ in an age of anxiety and fear?