

## Ripon & Lower Dales

### Worship at Home

25<sup>th</sup> June 2023

### The River of Life

Over the last three weeks we have been travelling through Revelation, that rather strange book at the end of our Bibles. It's full of mystery and visions we find difficult to understand, but it is all about Jesus. Through him the final victory is made, not as a mighty Lion king that the people had expected from the tribe of Judah but as a sacrificial Lamb, the only one worthy to carry out God's purposes.

#### Call to Worship

Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.  
(Rev 21: 3-4)

#### Hymn StF 59 Lord the light of your love

1 Lord, the light of your love is shining,  
in the midst of the darkness, shining :  
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us ;  
set us free by the truth you now bring us-  
shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,  
fill this land with the Father's glory ;  
blaze, Spirit, blaze,  
set our hearts on fire.  
Flow, river, flow,  
flood the nations with grace and mercy ;  
send forth your word,  
Lord, and let there be light !*

2 Lord, I come to your awesome presence,  
from the shadows into your radiance ;  
by your blood I may enter your brightness :  
search me, try me, consume all my darkness —  
shine on me, shine on me.

3 As we gaze on your kingly brightness  
so our faces display your likeness,  
ever changing from glory to glory :  
mirrored here, may our lives tell your story-  
shine on me, shine on me.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

#### Prayers of Praise, Adoration and Confession

Holy God, you are greater than anything we can imagine,  
More powerful than anything we know.  
Yours is the sovereignty that holds all things in the palms of your hands.

Holy God, we praise and adore you,  
The one true, living God who fills the whole universe with life, love and meaning.

Your love flows outwards like a never-ending stream of water, from a spring that will never go dry,  
We praise you, that no matter what our guilt, you still reach out and call us home to you.

We praise you that in Christ we have the perfect sacrifice for all we do wrong - to ourselves, to others, and your creation.  
Through Christ, we are forgiven, restored and healed of the rift between us and you .  
Through Christ, we are assured of your eternal love and a new life in you.  
Amen.

## **Bible Reading      Rev 22:1-6, 12-17**

### **Eden Restored**

**22** Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

### **John and the Angel**

<sup>6</sup> The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

### **Epilogue: Invitation and Warning**

<sup>12</sup> "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. <sup>13</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

<sup>14</sup> "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. <sup>15</sup> Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

<sup>16</sup> "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

<sup>17</sup> The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

### **Reflection**

As we come to the end of Revelation, and the end of the Bible, we see John's vision of a hope that flows like a river, and a tree that will bring healing to the nations. Note how the tree roots actually straddle both banks of the river that flows from 'God and the Lamb'. This can signify Jew and Gentile, or any warring nations. Imagine how this healing tree could stand between Ukraine or Russia, or a country where there is civil unrest.

There are many fruits on the tree, and a variety of them too, which brings to mind Galatians 5:22 "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control". Added to the water of life that flows out to all people and the fruits of the tree on offer at all times and seasons, there are edible leaves for healing. Ezekiel 47:12 says "fruit trees of all kinds will grow on the banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail".

John sees a time when people will cease to war, where all will be fed, and all will be healed, because the fruits on offer mean we will love and take care of each other.

Do you feel that is a possibility, that there will a time of peace on earth? It can be difficult to have that hope, especially when watching the news on

TV. Yet, in v 6, the angel said, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place”.

The God who inspired the prophets with words of warning and wisdom, is the same God who sent his son Jesus to teach and guide us, and he is the same God who sends us a message of hope today, that his purposes – his plans, will be brought to fruition. Through the fruits of the Spirit, we can be part of that purpose. It’s not too difficult to be kind, or gentle; patience may need work, as can self-control, but if we keep faithful than we can sow seeds of love, joy and peace.

In v12 we hear Jesus speak “Behold, I am coming soon. My reward is with me and I will give to everyone according to what he has done”. Jesus offers a reward to those who follow him. The phrase “blessed are those who wash robes, refers to the people who strive daily to live a sin-free life and to be faithful to God. Those who do that “have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city”. That city can be envisaged as a return to the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3: 22-24, you can read how Adam and Eve were barred from the Garden. In Revelation we read how, through Christ, we can enter and we can eat from the tree of life when we acknowledge He died for us, as a sacrifice for our sins.

The Holy Spirit and the bride (meaning the church) in v17, tell us to come. It is an invitation to all the world to come to Jesus and receive the salvation on offer through him. We are freely offered this invitation to drink the water of life and eat from the tree of life. Are you ready to accept the invitation?

## **Hymn StF 372 Down the mountains the river flows**

1 Down the mountain the river flows,  
and it brings refreshment wherever it goes.  
Through the valleys and over the fields,  
the river is rushing and the river is here.

*The river of God sets our feet a-dancing,  
the river of God fills our hearts with cheer;  
the river of God fills our mouths with laughter,  
and we rejoice for the river is here.*

2 The river of God is teeming with life,  
and all who touch it can be revived.  
And those who linger on this river's shore  
will come back thirsting for more of the Lord.

3 Up to the mountain we love to go  
to find the presence of the Lord.  
Along the banks of the river we run, we  
dance with laughter, giving praise to the Son.

Andy Park

## **Prayers for Others**

God of hope, you sent prophets to speak of a time,  
when wars would cease,  
when people would live in peace and harmony,  
when nature would be restored to the perfection of your creation.

God of hope, we pray for our divided world,  
May hostilities cease, and negotiations of peace be fruitful,  
May people find sufficient bread to satisfy hunger,  
and fresh water to drink,  
may justice prevail  
and the poor and vulnerable find fresh hope in you.

God of hope, we pray for our earth,  
Your creation,  
May we consider the fragile web of life  
that maintains eco-systems,  
May we seek ways to combat climate  
change,  
Lessen our folly and greed, so that the  
earth's resources are equally shared  
and not over-exploited.

God of hope, so many in our world live  
in darkness,  
We pray for those living with grief,  
overcome with the sorrow of losing a  
loved one.  
We pray for those who are feeling ill  
and anxious about their diagnoses;  
those in hospital, care homes,  
hospices.  
We pray too, for all the healers and  
carers, tending the sick.  
We pray for the abused, neglected and  
lonely;  
may your healing hands bring comfort  
and peace to those hurting today.

God of hope, we pray for ourselves,  
May we always put our trust in You,  
May we always walk in the Light of  
Jesus,  
And be guided by the Spirit to drink the  
water of Life that will sustain us.  
Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

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.

### **Hymn StF 738 There is a new heaven; there is a new earth**

1 There is a new heaven ; there is  
a new earth ;  
there is a new city that God brings to  
birth.

It lives in the mind of our Saviour this  
day  
where tears, pain, and sadness are all  
wiped away.

*Come, people of God, your  
courage renew,  
for God reigns already, creates life  
anew.*

*Be faithful and bold to welcome God's  
day,  
that tears, pain, and sadness may  
vanish away.*

2 The homeless and hungry will  
sing a new song,  
for leisure and labour to all shall  
belong ;  
distinctions, divisions which hurt and  
destroy  
will all disappear, leaving love, hope,  
and joy.

3 The river lifegiving shall stream  
from God's throne,  
with healing, forgiving : war shall not  
be known.  
The nations shall gather to live in  
God's light,  
united forever in joy and delight.

Ruth Duck (b.1947)

### **Blessing**

Jesus is the First and the Last,  
the beginning and the end.  
The grace of the Lord Jesus is with all  
God's people.  
May the blessing of God, the Father,  
the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you  
now and always. **Amen.**

Kathy Lowrie