

Looking Beyond Lockdown

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[0 : 00] Let me, first of all, extend a very warm welcome to you all to this service today. We are glad to be able to come to meet together in this way, having had so many months of lockdown and restrictions in relation to the COVID situation.

It's unusual, of course. I have the advantage of not having to wear a mask. Otherwise, you wouldn't hear very much of what I say. I know it's a bit uncomfortable, and I will try and not extend the service too long.

But because we don't have singings, it's not likely to be as long as normal anyway. Now, you have all the intimations on the bulletin, and that gives you directions as well as to how to enter and leave the building.

If you can please remain seated after the benediction at the end of the service, you'll then be given directions as to how to make your way out. I will go out to the door here to my left.

You'll be coming out through the front. And I obviously won't be able to shake hands with you, but I would just like to say hello to you on the way out as you leave the building. So let's begin by reading, first of all.

[1 : 10] And we're reading from Genesis chapter 12. Genesis chapter 12, and from the beginning of the chapter. So Abraham went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him.

Abraham was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. And Abraham took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran.

And they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abraham passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time, the Canaanites were in the land.

Then the Lord appeared to Abraham and said, To your offspring I will give this land. So he built there an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him.

From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and I on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

[2 : 43] And Abraham journeyed on, still going toward the Negev. And we pray that God will bless to us that portion of his own holy word.

Now we're going to engage in prayer. Let's join together in prayer. Lord, our gracious God, we thank you today for the opportunity we have to worship you in a way that can physically gather together in this way.

We know, Lord, that that is the normal mode of our worship. And we pray that you would make us thankful that you have enabled us to be together here in this building to that end. We thank you for all that you have been to us since the time that we were restricted over the past few months.

For you have not changed, and you did not change. And we know, Lord, that we were able to worship you, and still are, even when we are not gathered together in a physical way.

We thank you for every provision that you have made for us, for the means by which we are able to hear your word, and to give our mind collectively to those things that pertain to your glory and to your praise.

[3 : 54] And, Lord, we ask that you would bless to us your word today, and bless every soul gathered here, and all who would like to be here but are unable, for various reasons, to be here.

We pray for all the gatherings of your people today, wherever they do meet. And we pray that you would bless every service that is streamed over the Internet as well.

We give thanks for these facilities, O Lord. We pray that your word will go forth today with your own Holy Spirit's power. We pray that you would send forth your light and your truth, that they may come indeed to be a blessing to our hearts.

We ask today, O Lord, that you would give us all the grace that we require during this time of testing, this time when we need to exercise patience and restraint and self-denial and faith and trust.

We thank you, O Lord, that as we know in your word, many providences in the history of your people in the history of the world have proved actually to be beneficial at last to your people, so that whatever terrors, whatever difficulties and trials came into their lot.

[5 : 08] Your promise is that you would bless these to them. And we ask, O Lord, that this time of restriction may be for ourselves as a people, as a church, and for all the Lord's people in our land and throughout the world, that it may be a means by which we emerge into further, deeper fellowship with yourself, further understanding of the things of your providence and of your will, and especially, O Lord, a readiness to give ourselves to you and to your service.

And we ask that your blessing, O Lord, will follow all that has happened and is taking place during this time. We pray, O Lord, throughout the world for all today who are affected by this terrible pandemic.

Lord, we pray that you'd bless all who have lost loved ones, the many, many thousands throughout the world of families who mourn the passing of loved ones taken by the COVID virus.

Yet we know, Lord, that there are many other thousands and millions who have lost loved ones also through other illnesses and through the natural wastage of life. Help us to remember them too, O Lord, and give us to realize that our life is hastening to an end.

Whatever it is will bring it to an end. Enable us to see, O Lord, that your time in this world is relatively short compared to that great eternity to which we are hastening.

[6 : 35] We pray your blessing on this congregation. We thank you for its ongoing witness and testimony. And pray, O Lord, that you would bless them at this time and in the days ahead.

And as they anticipate shortly also to meet in regard to the vacancy in the congregation, Lord, guide them, we pray. Give them to settle their minds firmly in a way that would seek your will, but also to follow it when you direct them.

And we ask that you would soon provide for them if it please you. A pastor to lead them in the things of God. We, O Lord, would seek that you would do this in a way that would provide them with regular personal ministry and pastoral care.

We thank you, Lord, for all who at this time take charge in the congregation. For Mr. Coggle, for the elders and the deacons, and for all who give of their time and of their service and of their gifts and talents to the furtherance of the gospel in this district.

O God, we pray that you would grant them your encouragement, your strengthening. Give them, we pray, that continued resolve to continue serving you whatever your providence means for them.

[7 : 49] And we ask that you would continue to bless your gospel among them and to increase the number of those who love you and confess you and know you and commend you to others around them.

We pray today for our nation. We pray for our governments, both in Scotland and elsewhere. Lord, we ask that you would bless our leaders with light and with wisdom.

We know that they carry a great burden at all times and especially during times of crisis such as these. We pray, O Lord, for them today, that they would carry their burden into your presence.

That you would give to them, Lord, to realize they don't already know this. That they rule by your decree. And that not only are they answerable to you, but that you are available to them to give them grace and to give them the way with all to govern wisely.

And, Lord, we pray that this may be true of them all. And we ask, O Lord, that through this time of continuing crisis, that you would bless them with light and with wisdom, even those who may not know you or follow you or love you.

[8 : 59] Nevertheless, Lord, we look to you as our leader ultimately in all things. And we ask now that you would continue to bless us in our families, in our homes, bless our children, grant to them, Lord, that as they return to school, those of them going to school, that you would bless them.

We pray for the teachers at this time who have returned to school and pray that you would bless them with the additional burdens that they carry now in regard to this situation.

We commend them to you and ask, O Lord, that you would continue to uphold them and bless them and make them a blessing to those under their charge. Now, Lord, we ask that you would continue with us here.

And as we turn once again to your word, we pray for your Holy Spirit to lead us and to guide us into it and to apply it to our hearts savingly. Receive our thanks, we pray, and pardon our many sins for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Well, we'll read again from God's word. This time we're reading is from the epistle to the Hebrews and chapter 12. Sorry, chapter 11. Hebrews chapter 11, and we'll read verses 1 to 16.

[10:09] Now, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the convictions of things not seen.

For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts.

And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found because God had taken him. Now, before he was taken, he was commended as having pleased God.

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists, and that he rewards those who seek him. By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things as yet unseen, in reverent faith constructed an ark for the saving of his household.

[11:22] By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.

And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.

Therefore from one man and him as good as dead were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

[12:40] But as it is, they desire a better country that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Amen. Again, we pray God will follow with this blessing our reading of his word. Now I would like to direct your thoughts to these verses, in verses 13 to 16 of the passage we've just read.

13 to 16 of chapter 11 of Hebrews. The providence of God that has brought us the COVID virus outbreak and the lockdown and all the circumstances that we're now aware of in relation to that COVID pandemic has given us material for reflection.

It's not just in terms of it being a time for reflection over these past months, but the actual virus itself and the conditions that we live in are themselves means that God has provided for us because everything comes under the overall direction of God.

It's given us means, material if you like, for reflection. It's given us the opportunity and the material to ask ourselves, what are the most important issues in human life?

[14:07] What do we live for? What is the end in living as we do in this world? What is the purpose? What is it that lies beyond this world, this present life?

These and so many other questions are ones that come obviously to mind. You may yourselves have other questions that have come to mind, other points that you've been considering over these past months during this time.

And there's no better chapter, I think, in the Bible upon which to base our thoughts in relation to these points and these questions than this 11th chapter of Hebrews.

Hebrews 1.5. Because it deals with, very much with, the exercise of faith in God, which, in the case of those who are mentioned, and in this summary passage in verses 13 to 16, take our minds

beyond the present life, beyond the circumstances of the present life, whatever they might be. And it assures us that the life beyond this world for God's people is, as it says in this passage, a better country.

[15 : 20] So I would like to look at these verses, first of all, just looking at two main points and a number of points under each of those. We'll look at, first of all, how this passage speaks about a trusting people.

A trusting people. And secondly, a trustworthy God. Most of the passage deals with the people that exercise this faith.

And it finishes the end of verse 16 by reference to God not being ashamed to be called their God. So although we're using that point and saying more than, more on the first point than on that second point, it doesn't mean that that second point, the trustworthy God, of course, is less important.

It isn't. But most of the material is about a trusting people. How do we find them described as a trusting people? Well, they're a people of faith because that's what runs all the way through the chapter.

And faith is essentially trusting in God. Faith is more than just believing certain things to be true, although faith does contain that element. Faith is actually a believing and a trusting, a leaning upon the person that is giving us the information.

[16 : 37] In this case, it's God. And so the passage is really a summary in the chapter that deals with examples of faith. It goes on then to speak of other examples, Abraham, Moses, and so on.

So this passage is really a break or a bridge between those that have been spoken of previously and those that he's going to speak of afterwards. And in that bridge, he provides for us the features that really describe a trusting people.

And there are three especially that we can just give our minds to for a moment. These trusting people, first of all, have welcomed God's promises.

Secondly, they give evidence of where their home is. And thirdly, they overcome temptations to go back. And of course, here it's talking about countries, whereas going back spiritually, of course, going back to the life without faith that most of us lived prior to coming to faith and to knowledge of God savingly.

So these three points are trusting people are those, firstly, who have welcomed God's promises. Look at how it says here, these all died in faith, not having received the things promised.

[17 : 54] Now to die in faith is an important emphasis in itself. These all died in faith. Because it's been speaking all the way through now and will afterwards as well of how they lived by faith.

And how they lived by faith in the way in which they engaged in certain activities, certain works, which gave evidence of their faith. But he's now saying these all died in faith.

And what that means is the exercise of faith was as much a feature of their dying as it was of their living. They didn't actually stop believing as they had been living.

They actually stopped, they didn't stop trusting in God, believing in the way they had when it came to their dying. they all died in faith.

Without that faith their death would have negated everything. Because that's what it's about. That's what the Bible assures us of. Without faith, when we come to die, death itself negates everything for us.

[18 : 56] Remember Paul to the Philippians said, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Well, if we die without faith, without salvation in Christ, you can reverse that statement.

For me to live is without faith and to die is loss, not gain. And to die without Christ is ultimate loss. It's total loss.

It's the loss of everything. That has to do with life as described in Christ in the Bible. So they died in faith, not having received the things promised.

Now, notice it's not saying they didn't receive the promises. What it's emphasizing is they did receive the promises. God gave them many promises, such as to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, but they didn't receive the things promised because what God was promising, what the substance of the promise was, was an inheritance to come.

Or to put it in the words that describe Abraham earlier on in the passage, he was looking for a city along with his descendants. He was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God.

[20 : 08] That's not in this world. That's heaven. That's heaven described. That's the inheritance that God has as the substance of the promise. When he's saying to all who believe and trust in him, this is what I'm giving you.

This is the inheritance that is yours by faith. They hadn't received, they didn't receive the things promised when they actually died, when they left this world.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised. You could say that they died in hope as well because obviously hope, along with faith, closely relates to the promises of God. Hoping, in the positive sense of believing that they will be fulfilled by God. We'll leave that aside. Not having received the things that were promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar.

That's why I'm saying that they welcomed God's promises because this word greet is important. Having seen them and greeted them from afar. They gave a warm welcome to the promises of God.

[21 : 14] I mean, when you come to realize that the promise of God in Christ is eternal life, contrasting that with what you have without faith in Christ, well, you welcome that promise.

When you come to be concerned over your sin, when you come to realize that you're a lost sinner, when you come to realize that your own production of righteousness as you attempted is not sufficient, is not going to meet with the requirements of God at all, but realize that God has provided that already in Jesus to which the promises are attached, then you welcome the promises.

They're very meaningful to you. They're not just some things that are written on a bit of paper. paper. They have spiritual importance and power in your life.

They saw them and greeted them. And it's interesting that it says, having seen them and greeted them, the things which were promised, the things of this inheritance, they saw them and greeted them.

them. The seeing is also important as well as the greeting. The reason they greeted them, if you like, is because they were able to see them. Not physically, of course.

[22 : 23] There's a spiritual side. Please don't let anyone take your mind away from the truth of these promises, the fact that they are God's truth as much as any other aspect of his truth, because the world you live in will say to you, I can't believe anything I can't verify for myself.

I can't believe anything I can't really understand for myself. I can't believe anything that science hasn't verified for me. Here's something that science cannot verify, that no experiment can actually come to prove right or wrong.

What is it? Life. Life. You can't put eternal life in a laboratory and say, no, I believe it.

It's by faith. I have faith in the word of God, faith in the promises of God, that you come to see that life spiritually, that you understand it to be real, to be true.

And so you greet that from afar. The promises are made real to you. Just as you find when you look up into the sky on a clear night, you can see so many stars and planets shining there, but if you look at things through a gigantic telescope, if you look at through the Hubble telescope in space, for example, obviously then you're going to see objects you can't possibly see with a natural eye.

[23 : 45] And it's the same for faith. It is your soul's telescope, so that you can actually see spiritually the things that God mentions, that God says, that God promises.

They are just as real to you as your own face in the mirror. They are as real to you as somebody sitting beside you, God's promises in Christ.

So, they welcomed God's promises. These are the trusting people. Isn't that how it is for yourself today? I'm not saying, simply it extends to believing that God has given promises to his people.

What you have to do, what I have to do, is make these promises personal to myself. They have to become promises to me, promises that I treasure, promises that you treasure, promises that you take into your heart.

That's why you welcome them. That's the question at the end of this point, and have you welcomed the promises of God? Are they still somehow out there without you having made them personal to yourself?

[24 : 50] Well, when Jesus becomes your Savior, when you accept him, when you receive him into your heart, the promises come with him. Every single promise that God has made concerning eternal life is actually yours in possession, even though you don't receive the things promised until you reached heaven itself, most of them.

So that's the first thing. The second thing about these trusting people is they give evidence as to where their home is. Look at what he's saying here. They confessed, having seen and greeted them from afar, having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

People who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. They give evidence of where their home is. They confess that they are strangers and exiles on the earth, that however much they value things that they find in this life as we all do, they cannot and will not say this is where their home is.

They're passing through it. They're on a journey through life, but this is not where their home is. Their home is in heaven and the inheritance God has promised.

You can find the same thing in verses 9 and 10 where it says of Abraham he went to live in the land of promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise, for he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder has got.

[26 : 14] Now notice the difference between the concepts between tents and city. What are tents? Tents are things which you use for a temporary place of living or perhaps just on holiday or whatever or for the day out.

Even if you're spending time there, you find a video I'm sure you've seen of people who live in tents in far off places and that's their way of life.

They go from one place to another. They're nomads. But the point is the tent is not fixed. It's not permanently in one place. It's something that can very easily be picked up and taken on to somewhere else.

That's the kind of life that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob lived because they lived in tents in the land of promise as in a foreign land because their eyes were beyond this world, beyond even the literal Canaan.

The literal Canaan was for them, the geographical Canaan was a type or a symbol of the heavenly Canaan, of the inheritance. And so the passage is telling us in this world we're living in tents.

[27 : 21] We're not here permanently. This is not our home. And for those who trust in the Lord, their home is in heaven. So this is what it's saying.

They confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they're seeking a homeland. They're making it clear they're seeking a homeland.

That's just adding some more but very important information to what it's saying about having acknowledged they were strangers and exiles on the earth. Because if you're a stranger or an exile somewhere and you're passing through, then anybody who meets you, you're going to tell them, well, this isn't actually where I live.

This isn't where I belong to. This is not my native place. My native place is elsewhere. And that's what these trusting people, these people who trust in God and in his promises, that's what their lifestyle is really saying.

It's a challenge to ourselves as well, isn't it, that our life would actually give off this evidence of where their homeland is. And the word seeking there is quite a strong word.

[28 : 31] They make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. Seeking, you find it also in chapter 13, verse 14, where you find here we have no lasting city, very similar language, but we are seeking the city that is to come.

In other words, there's a diligence attached to this. There's a certain earnestness and seriousness in this seeking. This is not something that's casually done.

It's not something that's done just as a pastime. It's part of the very substance of the Christian life of these people, of these trusting people, that they are actually making it clear they're seeking a homeland.

That's what life in this world is. They're diligently looking forward and diligently making preparation for their homeland. To go home when the time that God has appointed has come.

It's a bit like the kind of seeking, after all, when you're going somewhere, you have an appointment, and then you don't find your car keys. You're not going to try and just wander about casually looking for them.

[29 : 35] It's going to be an earnest seeking. I've got to find these car keys. I've got this appointment in 10 minutes' time, 20 minutes' time, half an hour's time. I need these keys. And that's what the writer here is saying to them.

They earnestly sought. They were serious about it. It wasn't something just as a sideline. It wasn't a recreation. It was the business of life.

It was the most important thing for them. They were trusting in God and in his promises, so they were giving evidence. They were making it clear that their homeland was not here, that they were seeking a homeland.

But notice also the homeland itself is an important word. In English we have the word patriot, and a patriot basically is someone, male or female it doesn't matter, someone who loves their native land. We very often find it described in those who are engaged in the military. They're patriots, they serve their country. Of course it extends to many other types of activities as well, but a patriot is someone who loves their country, who wants to serve their country, who wants to make a good impression of what their country is about.

[30 : 52] So here he's saying we have a homeland, we have a patria, the word is in Greek, and from that you get the word patriot. They're seeking a homeland, they're seeking a place to call home, that's already home for them, that God has made home for them, but they're seeking it, they're going towards it, they're making it clear that's where they actually belong to and that's where they're heading.

Of course there's a great challenge in that, for myself and for yourselves as well, a challenge in our lifestyle. Does our life reflect that our home is in heaven?

Are the things we say, is our language, is our activity, is our relationship with people, are all of these things of life as we now have it, are all of the things we have actually thought about and shown and said under this lockdown, under these conditions, has it made clear that this is not our home?

Or has this COVID pandemic, has it made us convinced that the things of this world cannot be our permanent home, that our home must be a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

They have welcomed God's promises, they give evidence of where their home is, but they thirdly overcome temptations to go back. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return, but as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.

[32 : 32] They would have had opportunity to return. return. The word return there carries with it the idea of bending towards something. In other words, it carries the connotation of something that is actually sinful, something that is not right.

Think of the people of Israel having left Egypt, they weren't very long on their journey when they were bending back towards Egypt, regretting that they had left the delicacies of Egypt behind when all they had in the desert, as they thought it, was manna, and they lacked water, so many things that they had in abundance in Egypt, they were bending back towards it.

And you'll come across yourselves, you know very well yourselves, the many temptations that you meet with in this life, that would, if you left things to yourself and to the flesh and to your natural thinking, it'd bend back towards them like the people of Egypt.

You find times when, with the psalmist even, in Psalm 73, if we're really honest about it, as we have to be, there may be times and incidents in your life or periods in your life where you're envious at the people of the world, where life seems to be so easy for them, where they don't have to exercise self-denial, where they don't have to be bothered about holiness of life and dealing with sin.

That's how the psalmist was in Psalm 73, until he went into the temple and he began contemplating on his thoughts and upon God's truth, and then he says, I came to know again the truth for what it is.

[34 : 07] You shall guide me with your counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom do I have in heaven but you? And on earth there is none I desire besides you, O Lord, for my flesh and my heart are failing, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

whatever times in your own life you faced the temptation to go back to what you were before you knew the Lord, you know that that temptation was real.

It wasn't just a figment of your mind, it was something that confronted you, something arising from the sin that's still in your own heart, something that arises from the devil's own temptation, but you know how real it was.

You know your thoughts at the time where well, I regret, maybe I'm not able to do some of these things now that I used to, but then you soon hopefully came to yourself and realized, well, that's not what my life's now about.

It's a temptation to go back, but I don't want to bend my life that way, I want to keep on straight, going towards my homeland, because that's what trusting in the Lord means for me.

[35 : 23] And he adds there, if they had been thinking of that, if this was really on their mind, they would have opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one.

They desire a better country, and he adds that is a heavenly. What is it that makes them really convinced, apart from their view of God, of course, what is it that makes them convinced they don't want to go back at all to what they once had and live that lifestyle they had before they came to know Christ?

Well, because what's ahead of them is far, far better. That's what it says. They desire a better country. And the language there really means better in every way, superior in every way to anything that you find this life affording you.

They desire a better country. And if we could get time to go into the words a little bit more, I don't want to stretch things out too long, but the word desire actually means something like what you have in Philippians 3 and verses 12 to 14, where Paul is there talking and giving his own testimony really.

But he's saying, I stretch towards, I reach towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And he's using language there that describes things as a stretching out, like an athlete reaching the final tape in the race.

[36 : 54] You'll see them stretching out, just leaning forward, making sure if they can that they're actually in the best place. Well, that's what those trusting people are like.

They're stretching forward to the heavenly one, to the better country. Friends, today, we live in a world that even without the COVID virus is so often marked by death, by disease, by mourning, by weeping, by sadness, by loss.

There is a better country, thankfully. Described in Revelation chapter 21, there'll be no more weeping, no more death, no more crying, no more pain.

For behold, God is saying, I make all things new, the former things are no more. Isn't that looking beyond the lockdown?

Isn't that what our minds today are reflecting upon? Isn't that what we're stretching towards as a trusting people who have welcomed God's promises, who give evidence of where our home is?

[38 : 12] and who overcome temptations to go back. Maybe not consistently, I'm sure none of us can say, I've always resisted that sort of temptation, but we still come back to doing it, to realizing that this is what the Christian life is about.

So that's a trusting people. I want to finish briefly with a trustworthy God. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them, or he has prepared for them a city. Why would it say anything to do with shame or being ashamed when he's speaking about God? God is not ashamed to be called their God.

You might say, well, of course he's not. Why even mention that? Isn't that an obvious thing in a way? But the language is language that is relating to promising.

You know how disappointing it is when someone has promised you something and they fail to keep the promise. Or if you've promised something to someone else and somehow or other things have come around that you cannot fulfill that promise, well, you feel a bit ashamed, don't you?

[39 : 27] You regret having made the promise and now you can't keep it. So what this language is really saying is God always fully keeps his promises.

He's not ashamed to be called their God. They call him their God. They refer to him as their God because they know he's true to his promises. They know they can trust in him fully.

He's a trustworthy God. Therefore he's not ashamed to be called their God because he will never be short of what he has promised. He will never actually fail to do what he has promised for them.

Because he has prepared for them a city. Now you notice the tense there. The word prepared is not the future tense.

It doesn't say for he will prepare for them a city. He's saying he's not ashamed to be called their God for he has already prepared for them a city. And that word prepared has in it the idea of everything being ready to move in.

[40 : 34] You know what it's like sometimes if you've gone to a hotel you've booked a room and you arrive at a hotel you've said well your room should be ready by two o'clock so you arrive there just before two and they'll say I'm really sorry we've had some problems today your room is still not

ready so can you come back in an hour's time.

There's a promise that you believed in or you gave place to and it's not fulfilled it's not fulfillable at that time whatever the reasons for it. So it's not ready for you to move into your room.

But this is what God is saying about heaven. He has prepared it. It's all ready. Everything's in place. Nothing needs to be added to it.

You're not going to get to the gates of heaven as a Christian as a trusting believer in Christ to be met by God who will say to you sorry your room's not quite ready yet give me some more time to make it ready.

I need a few more things in order to be put in place so that this will be ready for you and then you can move in. There's nothing like that. It's all ready. Every single item in it is in its own rightful place and it's reserved for all of these trusting people individually and together.

[41 : 47] That's their homeland. That's the city that has foundations. That's their room. That's their mansion above. when was it finally prepared?

I'm going to leave that question with you. He has prepared for them a city. It's all ready to move into. When did he make it ready? When did God put the final pieces in place?

Well let me just point you to John chapter 14 verses 1 to 3 just to make something of a Sunday afternoon study for you.

When did God make it ready? Look at that passage you'll find the answer I'm sure you know it already anyway I'm sure but that certainly will provide the answer for you.

So they are a trusting people and a trusting people who trust in a trustworthy God looking beyond not just the lockdown but looking beyond this life looking beyond the present looking into eternity looking towards homeland which I trust is through for me and for all of you as well.

[43 : 03] Let's pray. Almighty God we give thanks that your word is true that every aspect of what you have revealed of yourself is true.

We thank you today for your trustworthiness that we can readily come to lean our life upon you.

That you are a sure foundation to all who trust in your promises.

We bless you oh Lord that we are assured that all that you have promised will be fulfilled because you are yourself a God of truth.

We thank you today for every privilege we know in relation to faith and what faith brings into our possession. we pray that you would strengthen our faith that you would grant us Lord to have it confirmed even during these times of difficulty.

Enable us as we face them in faith to reach forward towards those things where we have our permanent possession and residence in heaven. Lord give us today we pray to look to you and any of us Lord who have still not come to trust in you and to give our life over to you.

[44 : 13] Help us today to do this. Enable us Lord we pray to have that faith that this chapter describes so that even if we could never say of ourselves that we have great faith.

Nevertheless Lord we would want it to be real faith and sincere faith. Hear us we pray and accept us now for Jesus sake. Amen. We're not singing of course but I'm going to read a few words from the psalm.

Psalms 16 and then pronounce the benediction. So I'm going to read these words from the metrical version of the sing psalms Psalm 16 from verse 5.

O Lord you are to me my cup and portion sure the share that is assigned to me you guard and keep secure the land allotted me is in a pleasant sight and surely my inheritance to me is a delight I'll praise the Lord my God whose counsel guides my choice and even in the night my heart recalls instructions voice before me constantly I set the Lord alone because he is at my right hand I'll not be overthrown therefore my heart is glad my tongue with joy will sing my body too will rest secure in hope unwavering for you will not allow my soul in death to stay nor will you leave your holy one to see the tombs decay you have made known to me the path of life divine bliss shall I know at your right hand joy from your face will shine let's stand now for the benediction now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore Amen