

Salvation - Our Ultimate Security (1)

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Date: 21 June 2020

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[0 : 00] Very good morning to you all. Let me first of all extend a very warm welcome to you, wherever you are today, on behalf of Stonway Free Church to this very short service. I trust that God will bless you wherever you are and bless his word to you, especially today.

We're going to read his word first of all, and that's from Isaiah chapter 25. Prophecy of Isaiah and chapter 25. O Lord, you are my God. I will exalt you, I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful, and sure.

For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin. The foreigner's palace is a city no more. It will never be rebuilt. Therefore strong peoples will glorify you, cities of ruthless nations will fear you.

For you have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm, and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall, like heat in a dry place.

You subdue the noise of the foreigner as heat by the shade of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is put down. On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

[1 : 32] And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth.

For the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Behold, this is our God, we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for him.

Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain, and Moab shall be trampled down in his place. A straw is trampled down in a dunghill, And he will spread out his hands in the midst of it, as a swimmer spreads his hands out to swim.

But the Lord will lay low his pompous pride, together with the skill of his hands. And the high fortifications of his walls he will bring low, lay low, and cast to the ground, to the dust.

We pray God will follow with this blessing our reading of his holy word. Lord, let's join together now in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord in prayer. Lord our God, we pray today that you would be our God to help us to rejoice in your salvation, as we have been reading.

[3 : 01] You have provided salvation for us, though we acknowledge, Lord, that we are undeserving of it. Oh, we bless you today, Lord, that you are the God who is known in your word, as one who saves his people.

Who saves them from the destruction that is due to them for their sin. And who saves them, too, the security that you provide in your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord, we come today in his name. We know that as we come in his name, you have promised that you will receive us for his name's sake. We thank you for all that is in his name, for you have revealed yourself to us in heaven.

We thank you that your promise is that whoever believes in his name will have everlasting life. We thank you, Lord, for the revelation you have given us in him, of your plenteous redemption, of your mercy and of your grace.

Of your willingness to forgive our sin, to pardon us, to cleanse us from all iniquity. And so, Lord, we come with our confession, with our confession of our own sins.

[4 : 10] With confession, O Lord, on behalf of others in the world who may not even pray for themselves. For you have placed a burden on the heart of your people for others to be saved.

And when you have come to save each of us individually, we know, Lord, that our heart then goes out to those who are not yet saved. To those who need you and to those who do not yet know you

personally as their Saviour.

We ask, O Lord, today that your Holy Spirit will throughout the whole world gather people into that security that is in Christ. We pray that your Lord be active today, blessing your word, making it relevant and making it powerfully effective in the hearing of all who hear it.

Including those of your people like yourselves today who need and who acknowledge our need of being quickened, of being revived in our souls. And especially we pray too for those, O Lord, who don't know you yet and who are not saved.

Bring them, we pray today, into your kingdom. Grant to them the grace that will draw their hearts after you. Renewing their will, giving them that ability to embrace you as you offer yourself in the gospel.

[5 : 29] Lord, we come before you acknowledging that our need is greater than we can express, than we can understand. And yet we thank you that it is known to you in its entirety and in all its detail.

We thank you that whatever detail of our need, Lord, needs your grace today. We give thanks that you know it and that you provide for us what is exactly required and matches our need in every respect.

Lord, bless us today, then we pray, as a congregation separate from one another as we are at this time. Lord, we pray that you would hisen the day when we will be able to gather together once again in the buildings that we are so familiar with and that have been unoccupied for such a long time.

Lord, we pray that you would bring about an end to this virus and its spread and the devastation that it has caused throughout the world. We thank you for those who are seeking to find an answer to it, finding a vaccine to treat it, a way by which we can see its eradication.

Lord, we thank you for them and the skill you have given them. We pray that that will be available soon for us. But meantime, Lord, we thank you for those who guide us and seek to give to us the direction that we require to take for our safety, for our health being.

[7 : 01] We pray that you would grant us blessing, O Lord, as a people, as a nation, and we ask that you would continue to guide and instruct us. Lord, we ask, O Lord, as a people, as a people, as they will continue to give us, and to give them the direction of our God, that you would grant us and instruct us and say that you would not premiere our Word tolarly.

and the opening of our eyes to see that in these acts of providence, as surely as in your word, you are speaking to us. You are calling upon us to put our house in order, knowing that we too ultimately must surely die.

And we ask, O Lord, that you would make us wise, that you would enable us to choose life, the life that is in Jesus Christ, the life that is without end, the life in which we find the likeness of God.

We ask, O Lord, today that your spirit will indeed, as we pray, be active in our midst as a people.

Bless those in leadership over us as a government here in Scotland, also at Westminster.

Lord, we pray for them, not only because you require us to do so from your word's instruction, but you have laid it upon our heart to remember them. For we know that they carry such a burden of responsibility.

[8 : 19] We pray that you would help them to carry it in a way that looks to yourself and looks to the power and strength of your grace, even if they don't do so at the moment.

Lord, we ask especially that whether they come to embrace your word or trust in you or not, we pray that you would guide their minds so that as a people, we indeed may be led by you out of this time of confinement and restriction.

But we pray, gracious one, for the whole world and ask especially today for those who have come to know of death through this virus, affecting their families, removing loved ones.

Lord, bless them, we pray. Give them, we pray, to know the comfort that only your spirit can bring in applying your words, a balm to their hearts. We ask, too, that you bless all today, Lord, who care for those who are affected, not only with this virus, but other forms of illness, and also give us help at times of bereavement and sorrow, besides what happens with this COVID-19 outbreak.

We know, Lord, that death is common to our communities at all times. And we pray today for those who have bereaved and ask that you would comfort them all, whether they are known to us or not.

[9 : 40] Bless our children. Lord, be with them today. We thank you for them. We thank you for their place in your church. We thank you for your own concerns for them through your word that you invite them to come and rest and place their trust in you.

We pray for them today as they hear your word and as they learn of the things of the gospel. Bless them, Lord, we pray in their young lives. Protect them and keep them and guide them and comfort them.

And give them the desire and the resistance, O Lord, to every alternative that is placed before them to Jesus. And help them to cleave to you and not to leave the teaching of the gospel for something that is inferior.

Lord, we ask that you bless the parents of our congregations today. Bless them, we pray, in their homes and families. Bless them in their own concern for their children.

Bless those who teach them in schools. Lord, we ask that as we think in the months to come of a return to school, we pray that you bless all the young people and the children as they contemplate that return.

[10:50] And all those who are set to teach them, O Lord, we thank you for them. And pray that you would bless them in all the work that they do. We pray for those who look after, those who are ill in hospital and care homes.

And Lord, we ask that you bless them today. And those who care in the community, for those who are confined through illness and old age to their homes. We pray that you bless them and bless the lonely and those who are weak.

those, Lord, who we have not seen others for many weeks and many months. Bless them, we pray, and give to them your own upholding strength. So hear us now, Lord, we pray, continue with us.

And pardon our many sins now, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, children, as you know, we've been looking at some of the birds of the Bible over the last few weeks.

And today, I want to mention a few things about the owl. There are a number of places in the Bible where the owl is mentioned. I'm just going to read one of these passages. That's in Psalm 102.

[11:52] And the psalmist is there talking about his own sadness. It's a very sad psalm in many ways. And the sadness he speaks, he's comparing himself to a desert owl of the wilderness, like an owl of the waste places, there in verse 6.

Now, you'll have heard many stories about owls, I'm sure. You'll find them mentioned in many books and many stories for children. And the owl is very often associated with wisdom.

You hear of as wise as an owl. And that's probably because, well, I don't know, it's probably because of its huge eyes. It gives you the impression of being aware of everything and being wise. And it is a very clever bird, too. A bird that hunts by night, largely. And it has wonderful feathers. It has very wide wings, not just in the breadth of them that way, but each wing is wider than most birds.

And that helps it with the soft feathers to glide along silently, looking for its prey. And then very often, when it pounces on a mouse or a rat, the mouse and the rat has no idea it's there until it's caught.

[13:03] So the owl, there's a lot of interesting features to it. But here in Psalm 102, it's used to express sadness. The psalmist there is very sad. And he's sad because he feels not just the weight of his own sins, but it's obvious, as you read through the psalm, when he comes to speak about Zion, when he comes to speak about the place that he knows God is, God is actually worshipped in, in Zion, near Jerusalem, it's in a bad state.

And he's looking forward to the day when Zion will be repaired by the Lord, when he builds it up again, in verse 16 there. And in verse 14, he talks about even the very stones.

It looks like it's a psalm where something has happened that has caused destruction. And the people who love the Lord are wanting to see it rebuilt. So it's a sad psalm.

And he compares himself in the sadness to this owl, the owl of the desert. Now the Bible doesn't hide sadness from us. And that's important.

Because the world has a lot of sadness in it. And there's been sadness ever since man fell, became a sinner. But we're very much aware in these days, when this virus is going about, that sadness has really spread through all the world because of the deaths associated with this virus and the anxiety of it.

[14:26] The Bible doesn't hide us from sadness or hide sadness from us. It tells us about what sadness is like. And that's important because God doesn't hide from us things, even when they're difficult, such as sadness or loneliness or sorrow.

He doesn't hide that from us. He brings it out in his words so that we will learn to deal with it properly and especially to bring it to himself. Now you remember Jesus in Isaiah chapter 53 is called the man of sorrows who is acquainted with our grief.

Isn't it a wonderful title that our saviour Jesus has, that he's known among many other titles as the man of sorrows. Because when Jesus, the son of God, came into the world, when he was born into the world, he wasn't kept from sorrows.

Even though he was the son of God from all eternity, he'd been the son of God, but he wasn't kept from the sorrows of this world. In fact, he came to be the man of sorrows.

And of course that, as you know, ended with the sorrows of his death on the cross. Sorrows of Christ's death. So the Bible brings the sorrows, the loneliness, the bereavements, the pains that we find in our experience in life.

[15:54] It brings them all to the cross of Jesus. And it tells us this sorrow of Jesus is provided as God's salvation or through these sorrows of Jesus.

And we'll see in our study of our sermon today how that's very much part of God's salvation, taking away death, taking away our tears, taking away the whole reason for our sorrows.

So the wonderful thing is that Jesus, although he doesn't hide sorrow from us, and although he has come to know sorrow himself above our sorrows, yet he changes our sorrow into joys.

He changes our sorrow into joy. Psalm number 30. It's one of the Psalms that mentions that change as it comes about when Jesus, when God takes our sorrow and changes our situation.

And when you come to be saved and to know the Lord and to know your sins forgiven, it's a wonderful source of joy. And in Psalm 30, the psalmist is saying, you have turned for me my mourning into dancing.

[17:05] You have loosed my sackcloth, clothed associated with mourning, and clothed me with gladness, so that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.

O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever. So today, if you and I know something of the sorrow or the pain associated with sin, with things not being right in our hearts, where do you find God answering that in the Bible?

Well, it's in the sorrow of Jesus, and it's in taking our sorrow to Jesus, our pain, so that all the way through life, including our childhood, we'll know the joy of Jesus changing our sorrow into that joy.

Now let's say the Lord's Prayer again together. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

[18:20] Amen. Now we're going to read some more verses in the following chapter in Isaiah 26. Isaiah 26, we'll read from the beginning.

In that day, this song will be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city. He sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks open the gates that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.

For he has humbled the inhabitants of the height of the lofty city. He lays it low, lays it low to the ground and casts it to the dust. The food tramples at the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy.

The path of the righteous is level. You make level the way of the righteous. In the path of your judgments, O Lord, we wait for you. Your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul.

[19:22] My soul yearns for you in the night. My spirit earnestly seeks you. And so on. Again, we pray God will follow with his blessing.

And I want us to just look for a little time this morning at the first two verses of this chapter. We're going to take the first four verses over a couple of weeks, God willing, looking at them in turn.

But today, we want to look at the first two verses. In that day, this song will be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city that sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks.

Open the gates that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in. It's a fascinating study in the Bible just to study in itself the way the Bible deals with the city, the word city, the concept of city.

Because it has two sides to it. Sometimes you'll find a city mentioned as a place of wickedness, a place of ungodliness. And so a city can represent what is against God, what is in rebellion against God.

[20 : 33] The first reference to city in the Bible is actually Genesis chapter 4 and verse 17. And that's in relation to Enoch, not the Enoch who is a godly man, but Enoch, the son of Cain, killed his brother Abel.

God drove Cain out. He went away and dwelt in the land of Nod and his son Enoch built a city. And then you go to chapter 11 of Genesis where you find where you find a deliberate attempt on people in the plain of Shinar who came together and said, come on, let's build a city.

Let's make ourselves a name and build ourselves a city in case we be scattered abroad. And that is a deliberate alternative to God, to the security that God provides.

And that chapter in Genesis chapter 11 where it speaks about Babel and building the city up and the tower which was intended to reach up to heaven, that's really an indication or a picture, if you like, of man in rebellion against God.

Human beings trying to find an alternative to obedience to God and worship of God, looking at their own security, trying to create one for themselves, trying to actually manage life without God.

[21 : 51] And that's really what God looked at and came down to destroy. And then, of course, you have the ultimate in Babylon. All through the Bible from here in Isaiah, indeed, you find Babylon, of course, the words related to Babel, the same consonants in Hebrew.

Here in chapters 14, 13 and 14 of Isaiah, you find Babylon mentioned. Babylon in the Old Testament became the great enemy of Israel and representative of the enemies of God.

You'll find in chapters 13 and 14, you can read them through for yourselves later. In Isaiah, he's talking there about the destruction or the fall of Babylon, the pride, the pomp that God was going to deal with.

And that carries through in the Bible to Revelation chapter 18, where Babylon, again, representing all the forces that are against God and God dealing with them in his judgment. So you've got a city mentioned as representing ungodliness.

But then you've got the other side of things where you find the city of God, where you find Zion, as you find here in these verses. This song will be sung in the land of Judah.

[22 : 59] We have a strong city. And of course, in the Psalms, you find Zion mentioned so often and Zion being so precious to the Psalms, as we mentioned to the children, the rebuilding of Zion when God comes to rebuild Zion, when he comes to put it back together again.

And that's another image of salvation, God taking what's broken and actually reconstructing it. That's what happens in our salvation in Christ.

And the city of God, take that through to the New Testament, of course, you find Hebrews chapter 11, talking there about pilgrimage in verses 10, around verses 10 and 13.

You find the pilgrimage mentioned of those people. And then you find in chapter 11, verse 10, Abraham's spoken of. He went with his descendants, living in tents, not a place of security, but he looked for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Chapter 13, verse 14 of Hebrews. Here we have no continuing city, no lasting city, but we are seeking one to come. And then you go to Revelation.

[24 : 15] chapter 21, 22, that fantastic, wonderful description of heaven as a city that is so secure. God having built it for his people and they enjoying all the advantages they have in it.

Well, there's, well, very, very briefly, you can follow that through yourselves. I'm sure if you have concordance, look up the word city, follow through all the passages where it's mentioned and you'll find these two sides to the way the Bible deals with it, where it represents antagonism to God, rebellion against God.

On the other hand, it's mostly in the Bible a place where God has his people, where God provides for them the security, the ultimate security that they need.

of course, we're all looking for security. Every human being is looking for security. We're not necessarily looking for it in the right place, but it's a desire of our human heart that we have security.

We look for financial security. We look for security in our work, in our place of work. We look for security in our home. We guard it against burglaries. We guard it against other things happening to it, such as fire.

[25 : 28] We look for security in terms of our national life. People in the world today are looking for security who are disadvantaged above anything we know of, living daily with terrorism, with persecution, longing for security.

And when the Bible deals with security, it brings us to Jesus. It brings us to the security that Jesus gives so that we end up with the security of heaven.

Now the Bible talks or talks, as you know, about a route. I don't want you to spend too much time in the introduction here, but there's both the city and there's the route that leads to it. And again, you go to the Psalms, you find the Psalms mentioning the journey onto Zion, the road that leads to Zion, the things that happen on the journey, the difficulties of the journey, till finally they're so pleased to be in Zion before the Lord.

And that also is taken into the New Testament. And in the early chapters of Acts, you actually find the people of God, the Christians as they came to be called, they came to be known as the people of the way.

The way being Jesus himself or following Jesus so that the whole idea of pilgrimage as a spiritual journey is built around this path that God has for his people where Jesus himself ultimately is the way and the truth of the life.

[26 : 51] of course you find all of these images in the Bible built into the classic works such as John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, leaving the city of destruction, entering on this path through the narrow gate that led him on through many experiences until finally he came to the celestial city, the city of heaven that represented the city of heaven.

So what do we find then in these verses? Well it says in that day the song will be sung in the land of Judah. First of all, the first verse of the chapter we can take as the strong city and then verse 2 the entrance to the city.

We have a strong city. He sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks. So there's salvation and song at the very beginning of the verse and there's salvation and security when it talks about the city of strength, the strong city.

Now you notice in that day and that's repeated in many ways throughout Isaiah as you find it in the previous chapter verse 9 it will be said on that day and you skip forward to chapter 26 in that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah and as you read it you realize the day that Isaiah is talking about is a day that's projecting us forward to the last day to the day of judgment.

He's talking here about the Lord in chapter 25 verse 8 verse 7 he will swallow up in this day the covering cast over all people he will swallow up death forever the Lord will wipe away tears from off all faces and the reproach of his people he will take away on that day.

[28 : 37] We said this is our God we have waited for him and that anticipates the wonderful words of 1 Corinthians 15 where you find God dealing in the resurrection of God's people where they will come no longer to be subject to death where death is taken away finally and fully where it will be said when that moment comes O death where is your sting O grave where is your victory?

That's what Isaiah here is prophesying of that's what the subject of his song is but you notice it's simultaneously again if you read through chapter 5 as we have you can see it's simultaneously a day of salvation but also of destruction he's talking there about Moab similar to Babylon representing the antagonistic forces that are against God and against his people and this is God dealing with him in his judgment and he's talking about Moab in verse 10 there being trampled down in his place as straw is trampled down in a dunghill what a graphic picture of a midden a dunghill where straw is trampled down the wasteland the midden the destruction of all that is opposed to God on that day now remember friends this is not like you go to the movies or watch a movie on your television where you see something and it's got some features in it perhaps that give you to be scared something that maybe even portrays terror whatever and then at the end of the film you might say

I'm glad that's not real life I'm glad that was just a film well this is not a film this is real life these are real people actual people this is where life without God ends up in the destruction in the hell that awaits us if we die without Christ if we die without the security that we have in him and you contrast that of course that's Moab is representing there the pride the arrogance the self sufficiency the self security that people actually try to achieve without God and that's where it ends up if God doesn't save us we don't come to Christ and contrast verses 6 to 8 on this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food a feast of well aged wine a rich food full of marrow of aged wine well refined what could be a greater contrast to the midden the dunghill than the banquet and that's what

God is saying this is what I'm providing for my people they don't deserve it if you go through all of what Isaiah is saying you can see that they don't deserve it we'll see near the end of our study

today but this is what God is saying this is the banquet this is what belongs to my believing my saved people this is what I've provided for them it's the very best of stuff I've saved them from the midden and I've saved them to the city that's why they have this song on that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah we have a strong city that's God isn't it salvation is not just salvation from something that God takes us out of it's salvation to something to the opposite where God takes us into our ultimate security in his salvation salvation so that's the song that accompanies the knowledge of this security and we're singing aren't we that song ourselves today surely that you can participate in singing the song of the saved the song that celebrates this wonderful city of strength but there's also salvation and as we said security because you notice here it's saying salvation God has set has set up salvation as its walls and bulwarks and that's taking you back of course to the old style cities with walls and ramparts and bulwarks so that it's defended against any who would come to attack it and what he's saying here is salvation God has set up as the walls and bulwarks of this city the security the defences are God's salvation what a wonderful picture that is as well what does he mean he has set salvation up as walls and bulwarks well that's where our security lies God is saying to us through this your security is in what I have provided in salvation what is within salvation if you think of a city or the city walls in those times built of huge blocks of material built and put together so as to be a defence against enemies what are the building blocks of God's salvation why is it so secure why is it something in which you can have the utmost confidence because when you think of it these are the building blocks of God's city that provides security for us the birth of

[34 : 05] Jesus the person of Jesus the death of Jesus the resurrection of Jesus the ascension of Jesus the intercession of Jesus the forgiveness of our sins pardon cleansing us from iniquity our sanctification our holiness produced by the Holy Spirit our being made holy by God so as to be fit for that city you can add to that all the things that you find in the Bible comprise salvation all the building blocks of this city are God's salvation no wonder he's saying this is our ultimate security no wonder he's saying we can sing over this we can sing about this we can celebrate this no wonder he's saying we have a city of strength a strong city and you know when he's saying a strong city he really means that strength is one of the essential elements of it it belongs properly to this city because God has constructed it God has created God has put it together and today we can celebrate the fact that we have a city of strength in God's salvation nothing is able to penetrate these walls we have total security in it you contrast again what you find at the beginning of chapter 25 where he's saying in verse 2 there you have made the city a heap talking here about cities of the enemies the fortified city a ruin the foreigner's palace in a city is a city no more it will never be rebuilt you see there's

Isaiah saying here's the contrast to our strong city our city of strength the contrast in the way that any other type of security will ultimately fail what a wonderful privilege you have today to be a citizen of heaven to be a citizen that knows of the foundation that salvation gives to your life what a privilege to know that you have something that will never be broken into or broken up the strongest cities in this world are subject to earthquake think of the devastation an earthquake does when it hits a city even if it's very well built when the earthquake of God's judgment finally arrives in this world we do believe in that not like those who think that's just a figment of religious thinking when that earthquake of God's judgment finally hits this world at the last day the only thing that's going to remain standing is this city of God this spiritual city this salvation what you find and have in Christ the strong city salvation is a thing to sing about salvation and security provides your ultimate security nothing will demolish that you maybe feel very small today and the Covid virus itself has made us feel very vulnerable and very small this tiny unseen agent can actually destroy and has destroyed many lives and has taken many lives sadly from families throughout the whole world isn't it a thought provoking thing that that's the kind of thing you find that you actually find this virus unseen small tiny in itself and yet look at the devastation that it's caused well there's no virus can enter this city nothing can actually disturb or break down the security of this city the city that has these foundations is builder and maker is God where is your security today may I ask where are you finding a sense of well-being what is foundational to your life not only in this world but for eternity where will you go when you die will you enter into the city that is heaven with Jesus that's the prospect that's your hope you have the strong city but then look at entrance to the city in verse 2 open the gates that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in there's a cry here open the gates there's a claim to entrance on the part of those in the picture here that you've got in these

verses here are people coming to the gates and demanding an entrance open the gates to us how can this be that they have this particular demand this right if you like to have the gates open for them well it's answered isn't it in the following words that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in and that reminds you again of revelation chapter 22 verse 14 blessed are those who have washed their clothes their garments that they may have a right to the tree of life and may enter through the gates into the city the city that is described in revelation this wonderful secure place of heaven open the gates the righteous nation one thing to note from that of course is that the city already exists it's there to be entered into when we come to finally enter into heaven

God has that prepared for us it's there in Jesus Christ already that's why the gospel invites us into this if you go to Hebrews again chapter 11 from verse 16 you find there the pilgrimage mentioned verses 13 to 16 they that say such things they're speaking plainly about desiring a fatherland a homeland and God is not ashamed to be called their God why because he has prepared for them a city that's where the pilgrimage ends that's where life in this world what it comes to the city exists that's what the essence of the gospel call is the gospel call essentially is a call that invites you or God indeed commanding you if you like to come and enter this city come and actually take get entered into the route to this city come and receive this Jesus it's the same when you think of 2nd corinthians chapter 5 talking about the reconciliation that christ has effected through his death it exists it's there god has achieved it god has created it for us as a wonderful state into which we enter when we come to trust in christ and believe in christ and same with with the city the city exists it's not something that you have to try and manufacture for yourself it's actually something that already exists because god has created in christ for us what a difference that is to religion please don't mistake me i don't mean by that that the christian faith is not a religion in any sense what i mean is that when you find people saying oh he's got religion or he's become very religious or she's become religious well that in itself is really not saying very much because you can have an outward formality to a religiousness that isn't at all the same thing as salvation the most committed muslims are religious the most committed buddhists are religious there are different kinds of religions all the way through the world and just because people are committed to these religions or to religion itself you'll find people within christianity within the church that are religious but they're not saved because they've never come to christ they've just been trying to create a city for themselves a city of security by their own good works or by thinking that because they've done this or they've done that that brings security to them god will never look at them anything other than to be his people and to bring them to heaven here is isaiah long before jesus came talking about the gates to the city the entrance to the city is for the righteous nation and righteous means right with god the righteousness of jesus the righteousness that he died to create for us you don't create that for yourself it's not a garment that's self-made it doesn't have on its label made by j mckeever or whoever it has the name of jesus on it fabricated by him he died so as to make it for you and what god is saying is this is really not something you deserve neither do i in fact if you go through the whole of isaiah's prophecy the first chapter of isaiah's prophecy has a devastating critique of the people of isaiah's day it mentions them in terms that you would hesitate even sometimes to use because they're such a sinful people an ungodly people people who don't deserve salvation yet in chapter 1 verse 18 of that chapter having given that devastating critique yet you find come now says the lord let us reason together though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool because that's god in his mercy that's the grace that is in christ he says here open the gates of the righteous nation the righteous nation that keeps faith we could go into the word nation but have a good time it's simply it's something that we could say just in passing means it's not just a few stragglers that are going to enter into the city of heaven all god's people a multitude no one can number that they may enter in that keep faith what does it mean to keep faith it means essentially to be committed to the lord to be committed to the lord to keep faith with god i say well that rules me out because i find myself daily guilty of not keeping faith of not being through to the lord of not being committed to the lord so do i you're never going to be perfect on the journey to heaven perfection awaits you in the city you're never perfect on the journey that doesn't mean you can relax and not think about that but even paul when he wrote to the philippians was very conscious that he hadn't yet achieved or reached the point for which he had been saved where he actually had been grasped by christ so that he might come at last to that wonderful prize that was awaiting him the high calling of god in christ jesus and you remember at the end of that chapter that he speaks about people who are against god the enemies of god whose god is their belly their own inward appetites

who mind earthly things whose end is destruction does that not remind you of isaiah here the destruction of moab of babylon of all that is against god who glory in their shame whose mind is set on earthly things but you see the contrast immediately but our citizenship is in heaven from it we await a savior the lord jesus christ our citizenship is where the king is our citizenship is citizenship of heaven the place of the king the realm of the king the city of the king who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself so don't despair today when you find yourself saying well i don't keep faith all the time with god bring that to the lord confess it and seek grace to help you deal with it on a daily basis and then you and i can as we sure sometimes do use the words of that great hymn come thou fount of every blessing there's a verse in that hymn that fits with what we just said there where robert robinson and that hymn says oh to grace how great a debtor daily i'm constrained to be let that goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to thee prone to wander lord i feel it prone to leave the lord i love here's my heart oh take and seal it seal it for thy courts above we have a city of strength we have salvation as walls and bulwarks we have a

[47 : 50] right to go through the gates at last into the city so let's presently even now sing the song of the saved the song that will be sung perfectly when we enter the city at last and god bless his word to us again let's pray oh lord of god we thank you for the security that you have provided for us and that is available to us in christ jesus we thank you today that there is a city a place of dwelling for your people we thank you lord that you addressed your disciples and you now address us through your word in the same words you addressed them let not your hearts be troubled if i go to prepare a place for you i will come again and receive you to myself that where i am there you may be also we give thanks lord that you went through death and resurrection and ascension to glory to prepare a place for your people a city that has foundations that awaits your people in glory oh lord give us today to know that we are citizens of it the assurance that we have through faith in christ that we truly belong to those blessed people who will come through the gates of glory and be forever in the city of salvation grant us these mercies we pray and accept our worship for jesus sake amen we're going to conclude our worship now singing in psalm 46 from the scottish psalter version of psalm 46 and we'll begin reading at verse four we can read from the beginning but we'll sing from verse four god is our refuge and our strength and straits a present aid therefore although the earth remove we will not be afraid though hills amidst the seas be cast though waters roaring ache and troubled be yea though the hills by swelling seas do shake a river is who streams to glad the city of our god the holy place wherein the lord most high hath his abode we'll sing to the end of verse seven to tune stroud water a river is who streams to glad the city the city of our god the holy the holy place wherein the lord most high have his abode god god in the midst of earth does dwell nothing shall her remove the lord to her and help her will and that bright dearly prove the heathen rich who mount justly the kingdom smoothed where the lord god the god the earth the earth did melt for fear the lord

of hosts upon her side doth constantly remain the god of jacob our refuge are safely to maintain 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 ever more amen once again thank you for joining us for this service the evening service will go out at 6 30 that will be conducted by reverend kenny i mcleod may god continue to bless you all to keep you safe