

## WELCOME 24<sup>th</sup> April 2022 – 2 Easter '22 C

Revelation 4:1-11

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again...**Bible Study Qs** are provided to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word & work in your life, then you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-up**. (resume May)  
We're still doing things we need to maintain a level of safety: Hand sanitizer. Masks optional but certainly your choice. Thanks set-up & clean-up folks!

**As we move into this week...** Tim Chester, in his commentary 'Revelation For **You**' writes: "Before us is a door standing open in **heaven...**We can step through & see reality in a new light. This changes everything. We can't live in the same way once we've stepped through the open door of heaven. Our world is not a fiction. But neither is it ...the full picture...Nothing is what it seems...What matters (in our world) is not what really matters. Those with power (in our world) are not what they seem to be, & their power is not as significant as it appears. We think we are free, but we are slaves. **If** you're willing to have your world turned upside down, read Revelation 4." We will...today!

John sees a throne in heaven. God & his reign are at the centre of all things. We are not the centre of the universe not even of our own lives. If we get that wrong...we miss everything. God is at the centre but we are the desire of his heart & God wants us to share his heavenly glory & joy

**Then** as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, & the same voice I had heard before spoke to me like a trumpet blast. The voice said, "Come up here, & I will show you what must happen after this."

Christ is alive & present w/ his people & through Christ risen/ruling God grants us unlimited open access to his presence his power & his provision for our lives so we might live his purpose here...in spite of whatever hardship or difficult challenge we might face.

We'll continue to experience that today...

Let's pray...then hear God's Word...

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Loving God, we rejoice now in the glory of your resurrection, & celebrate today with Easter joy. Fill us from now on with confident hope & renew our spirits w/in us. Set our hearts on fire with a new depth of love & a new measure of strength as your light shines in the darkness of this world. Speak Lord for your servants are listening. Take hold of us that we might obey...through Jesus Christ...Amen.

## FAITH CHAT:

1. What part of the created world best demonstrates God's glory, power & majesty?
2. How might this glimpse into heaven effect how you think about, talk about, & respond to God the Father who intends for you to join him there?

### 3 EASTER '22 C – IN CHRIST'S HANDS: UNVEILING THE NEW REALITY – OPEN ACCESS

**A-c-c-e-s-s**... We typically spell that word like this: Loyalty program. Mbrshp card. VIP discount. Points deal. Advance notice for a sale. Special bargain for my b-day. In every case it's all about me...Every one of those ensures ~~my needs~~...my **WANTS** are catered for. We envision **ACCESS** in the language of "It's not what you know but...who..." Mate's rates are not a figment of our imagination...whether or not you have those mates is another story.

I have caught myself at times thinking of life in Christ the same way...I don't think I'm alone...that eternity is going to be me & folks I really enjoy hanging out w/ here hanging out forever & ever there...a private party w/ Jesus as the guest of honour & the Holy Spirit as bartender/DJ. I know I've preached a few funeral sermons where you could easily believe **WE** get to determine the joy of heaven...You don't have to be one of the prosperity preachers you see on **TV**/books fill bookstore racks to hope at some small level that God **really** wants **you** to be successful prosperous kids to have straight teeth & your marriage to be one jump for joy after another & never is heard a discouraging word & the skies are not cloudy all day...personal payoff for faith...even 12 "we left everything what do we get?"

Right <sup>b</sup>/<sub>4</sub> we moved here from Tx...a song burst into contemporary Xn music scene Above All & our music director had us singing it a bit...uggghh...no biblical evidence for the refrain's key line: **Like** a rose trampled on the ground...You took the fall & thought of me...Above all... the song suggests, as Jesus is crucified he thinks about me above all You? not so much me! We/Our world spell access "what's in it for me?"

Rev 4 is the perfect corrective...**Then** as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, & the same voice I had heard before spoke to me like a trumpet blast. The voice said, "Come up here, & I will show you what must happen after this." Instantly I was in the Spirit, & I saw a throne in heaven & someone sitting on it. The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper & carnelian. The glow of an emerald circled his throne..." John is invited to stand in the company of heavenly glory & there he sees a throne where the brightness of God's radiance floods in all directions. Everything emanates from & revolves around God's throne...not just a sign of his complete presence **BUT** his continuous universal rule over all things. At the centre of all things...God reigns.

Everything in this part of John's vision gives witness to the enduring grandeur & power of God & his rule over all things. Remember...the 1<sup>st</sup> recipients of John's writing were under the boot of Roman persecution. Rome saw itself as a 1000 year reign...an enduring age-to-age power that would hold the whole world under its sword. But despite its strength Rome was often awash in intrigue, turmoil & chaos from plague & war & political subversion - moral rot & socio-economic decay &

eventually complete collapse. But the glory of heaven is undisturbed & perfect in harmony & stability & strength. Every other throne can be shaken or overthrown. Every other throne/ruler/kingdom can become corrupt & oppressive. Not God's. His throne/rule/reign/sovereignty is permanent & secure & God's character is good. What is obvious is the joy & delight of all gathered around the presence & pre-eminence of the Father. He lives forever & ever. The praise of the living creatures is ceaseless toward him. The great reassurance repeated again/again over all John records: **God**, who created all things & is restoring all things through Jesus crucified & risen, reigns. *Is 52:7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace & salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns!*

Every day we are bombarded by images & warnings of threat & disaster – chaos & corruption – disruption & death – looming crisis & catastrophe...John knows: in this broken world it has always been so...But **NOT** where God's reign/rule his presence & pre-eminence are acknowledged & glorified. Tim Chester again...Our world is not a fiction. But neither is it ...the full picture...Nothing is what it seems...What matters (in our world) is not what really matters. Those with power (in our world) are not what they seem to be, & their power is not as significant as it appears.

John reminds us; in Christ we are ushered into what is real – what is ultimate – what will endure forever & ever...and in the midst of that which would frighten us – cause us to trust in something less-than – take us into that which will not cross eternity's threshold...distract or disturb...even now we are invited to live from what is ultimately ours & has always been: **You** are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory & honour & power. For you created all things, & they exist because you created what you pleased." (by your will – because you willed it) In the symphony & choir of heavenly glory God sees us...all his created "good beautiful true" beings...created by God's will for God's pleasure in God's image. You are no historical accident...mistake...fly in the world's ointment...disaster w/ feet...no matter what has happened to you, you do not have to live from that tragedy trauma as a victim your whole life because from his throne God looks on you w/ love & delight sees you in Christ absolutely remade in the fullness of his desire for you: **Even** before he made the world, God loved us & chose us in Christ to be holy & without fault in his sight." – Eph 1:4 The Father is not disappointed in you...he is not waiting for you to get your act together before he can bless you...From his throne God looks on you w/ love & delight sees you right now in Christ absolutely remade in the fullness of his desire for you.

John, by this vision of Christ, & the access Christ grants us to the very throne of God/grace, asks the church, **Why** would you live less than that? Why would you invest your life in that which will not cross heaven's threshold? Why would you cling

tightly to that which you will ultimately lose? Why would you allow a vision of your life that is less-than the vision of the Father for you hold power over you?

Throughout his ministry, Jesus pointed toward this moment of heaven open & us ushered in...of unlimited open access to the presence power & provision of God the Father for our lives so we might live his purpose here. Born in human flesh...living vulnerable to the hunger & fatigue & frustration & grief of our human life...taking children in his arms...touching the diseased to heal & taking hold of the dead to draw them back to life...washing the feet of those he loved...dying to take away our death... the temple curtain rent asunder...stone rolled away from the tomb & finally his Spirit dispatched to live <sup>w/in</sup> us & work through his church in this world...We have access only through the gift of Christ's life for us...

But that access always points us back to God...forces us to re-centre our existence on the Father. We are not the centre of the universe not even of our own lives. If we get that wrong...we miss everything. God is at the centre & we are the desire of his heart & God wants us to share his heavenly glory & joy starting right here right now.

Paul & I have been reading/talking about/thinking through **Disappearing Church** & toward the end Mark Sayers makes this point: for the Jews **Torah observance meant that everything pointed back to God...** It was not a tick box of how good you were so God would be happy <sup>w/</sup> you...but that everything pointed toward Yahweh: what you ate, what you wore, how you related to your family, raised your children, conducted your business, your intimate relations <sup>w/</sup> spouse (potential spouse or neighbour's spouse)...it established the pathway in this world of obedience & dignity, honour, respect, honesty, integrity, generosity & hospitality, kindness & compassion **BECAUSE OF** God's gracious intervention & rescue...

John, by this vision of Christ, & the access Christ grants us to the very throne of God & his grace, (Heb 4:16) leads us to that same path...where our lives point to the gracious intervention of the Father & his rescue in Christ re-centering our lives on God so we live obedience & dignity, honour, respect, honesty, integrity, generosity & hospitality, kindness & compassion...*“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, & self-control.”* – Gal 5:22-23 in spite of whatever hardship or difficult challenge we might face. boldly live from that grace...

#### **TAKE IT HOME:**

**What in your life needs to be reclaimed by Christ so that it flows from, revolves around & points back toward the Father?**

2 Cor 10:15 – “we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”

Let's pray with that in mind...

Our Father and our God...indeed work in our hearts so day by day we are re-captured by the grace we receive in Jesus Christ... that day by day we might be formed more & more in His image. O God, help us to look in the mirror to see ourselves as you have re-created us to be. Help us to look on Your Son & know what He has done for us, that when That Day comes, we might be like Him. Father, You have done the immeasurably good & gracious for the immeasurably bad & sinful. We can only give You thanks & praise...all this in Christ's holy name we pray. Amen