

Magazine: August 2025

“For the Christian, Heaven is where Jesus is. We do not need to speculate on what heaven will be like. It is enough to know that we will be forever with Him.” - William Barclay

It was a great joy this week to preside at the wedding of Adam and Jordan and as is customary at weddings I take, I always ask a question when commencing the sermon, ‘Does anyone know what Heaven is like?’ Perhaps not surprisingly, I haven’t received many answers!

I go on to say that none of us really know, that we write books about Heaven, sing about Heaven, have endless discussions about Heaven, but still, we don’t know what it is like. We are told as children (and as adults.....!!!) that it is a nice place where God lives, somewhere over the blue horizon, and it is where we go after we die (if we are good.)

I would say that we can’t understand Heaven with our minds, it is a concept we simply can’t grasp purely based on our own intellects. However, having said that, it is not remote from us, because there is another way we can know Heaven – by experiencing it.

We experience Heaven in many ways; a glorious sunset, a baby’s smile, a word of compassion or kindness, being a prayerful presence with someone suffering, a loving smile, in our relationships, receiving a sacrament, singing moving hymn, in music, art, literature, poetry and many other ways. On these occasions we experience Heaven not with our minds alone, but with our hearts and souls, because Heaven is a gift from God, sent with love, and therefore is very close to us.

At a wedding I say that the occasion is one where Heaven comes to us, to the couple being married, as they make their vows to one another before God and are blessed, and all those gathered with them. The wedding gift is Heaven given to them from God and is given to transform their lives and their relationship together, and their new relationship with their community.

By experiencing it, we realise that Heaven is a real place. Jesus said on the night before he was crucified: *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are*

many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:1-3). The place called Heaven is just as real as the place we call home, a real place filled with real people, which is why Jesus compares Heaven to a mansion with many rooms.

We tend to think that Heaven must be outside our present universe, that it is billions of light years away. However, the Bible hints that Heaven is very close, and the early Christians understood that they would pass immediately from this life into the presence of Christ in Heaven. I have personally experienced this when taking funerals and sense when praying with those who are near death and been aware of the door opening to them and glimpsed Heaven's glory beckoning - an indescribable privilege.

Some facts to conclude with; we're not far from Heaven, we're not far from the angels, we're not far from our loved ones in Heaven. We're not far from God, we're not far from Jesus himself. Heaven is a real place, and it is very close to each of us.

Thaks be to God. Amen.