

WEEK 2 - SUNDAY 10TH DECEMBER

The Second Sunday of Advent

Read: Revelation 7

'They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!'' **Revelation 7:10**

Cathy and I were watching a TV drama the other day. It involved a depiction of heaven and hell. We were commenting that people find it easier to portray hell, however inaccurate that may be. The idea of fire, eternal torment, shame seems to come relatively easily to us. Heaven is a rather different matter.

In today's passage we see a depiction of the gathering of the people of God in heaven. It may give us a clue as to why people find it difficult sometimes to see heaven in dramatic form. The truth is that when in eternity the whole people of God are gathered it will be a glorious time and we will experience the full beauty and the benefit of salvation. We often talk about heaven as being a time of worshipping God, day and night for eternity as is stated in this passage. The trouble is that is limited by our own experience of worship here on earth. No doubt, in truth, like me you have seen worship at its most beautiful and uplifting and bluntly, somewhat dreary, so that may not help to have an idea of what worship in heaven is like.

We will always be limited in our understanding of what heaven will be like by our own limited expectation and experience of life on earth. What we really need to know is that heaven is, as the passage says, to be constantly in the presence of God in the fullness of that sense. However much in this life we may experience God as a daily reality we are also hampered by life's difficult experiences and even the mundane ones. The promise of eternity is of a promise of a people constantly caught up in the reality of all that is good, of all that is beautiful, of all that is uplifting about their experience on earth and so much more. It is in the end the limitation of our own experience and imagination that will make us unsure about the promise of heaven.

Today, let us give thanks for the promise of the great gift of eternity that will surpass any understanding that we currently have. To know the gift of salvation and the hope of life spent in the glorious reality that we see promised in Jesus is as much as we could possibly hope for and desire.

Let us pray: *Loving God, we thank you for the gift and promise of resurrection and we look forward with confident hope to sharing eternal joy with you. Amen.*

The Venerable David Picken, Archdeacon of Lancaster.