

Sunday 13th September, 2026

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

So, join with us this morning to praise God, remembering David's words from Psalm 117: *Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.*

Prayer. Dear Father, From the time we wake in the morning, to the time we go to sleep at night we have so much to praise you for. We are surrounded by examples of your majesty, power and love. Your creation stares us in the face as we see the majesty of the sun and the rain, of plants and animals, the wonder of the bodies you have given us. You care for us, provide food and shelter, friends and family for us.

Yet, despite knowing all this, we don't always feel like acknowledging you. In times like this, as we struggle with sadness, we often think more about ourselves than about you. Forgive us, help us to return to you and remember your constant love, your promises to never leave us, to provide the best for us. We know that you will renew our hearts and souls, that through your Spirit we can have peace, that you will draw us close to you. Help us this morning not to be distracted, but instead to have clear heads and humble hearts, ready to acknowledge you, to come close to you & to learn of your purposes for us. In Jesus' name. Amen

Song – Hallelujah to the King of Kings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uGw7WB1cg8>

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| <p>1. Maker of the heavens and earth
Exalted by the roar of a multitude:
"Salvation and glory and power
Belong to our God".
The cry of hallelujah resounds
The fullness of time shows his victory
Justice and truth are revealed
His wisdom adored.</p> | <p>2. Praise the Lord you servants of God
All who fear him come, whether small or great
Fall before his throne in awe
And worship him
Blessed are those who will feast
At the glorious banquet of God himself;
The wedding of the Lamb has come
His bride is now here</p> |
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Chorus: Hallelujah to the King of Kings
Hallelujah the Almighty reigns
Let us all rejoice and give him
all our praise, our praise.

Bible Reading – Psalm 84:1-12 (NIV)

1 How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty! 2 My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. 3 Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near your altar, Lord Almighty, my King and my God. 4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah 5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. 6 As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion. 8 Hear my prayer, Lord God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob. Selah 9 Look on our shield, O God; look with favour on your anointed one. 10 Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. 11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favour and

honour; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. 12 Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

Announcements

Focus for the month: Growth. Every Church wants to grow but when they do grow there is always growing pains. New people come along who need to be welcomed, supported and included into our regular activities. The need for more workers (both paid and voluntary) to deal with new opportunities (and problems) that occur due to having more people involved. The need for new structures and programmes. And the need for the finances to support all of these. Recently God has given us wonderful blessings, lets respond to that challenge with wisdom, service and generosity of time, gifting and finance.

A list of jobs. After our recent Work Day at Charlestown there are still a list of jobs that are still to be done, some small, some bigger. We are putting this list on the notice board in the gathering space and so if you have some spare time (and the necessary skill!) to complete a job, then find one that would work for you and then speak to either Greg or Stephen T so that we can coordinate a way forward.

Position Vacant. We are looking for a replacement to Sam Wilson to become our Admin Assistant. 10 hours a week. Flexible timing of hours. Pay rate linked to Clerk level 4 salary. Responsible to Stephen Taylor. Applications of interest close TODAY. For more details, see Stephen or Audric

Help with the Computer & Sound Desk. We are looking for new helpers for both the mixing desk and the computer operation during Church services (we have run low on volunteers in both for the last year or so which has meant our few volunteers have had to work harder than normal!) So, we are running a training session TODAY 11:30am-12:30pm for those who might volunteer to help out in one of these areas.

Next preaching programme – Swansea/Charlestown AM.

Psalms: Life in the Presence of God

20/9 Psalm 133 The beauty of unity

Women's Conference | Saturday 19th September 9:00am - 1:00pm Presbyterian Women are holding a conference at Epping Presbyterian on Meeting Jesus. More info <https://ttw.pcnswwomen.org.au> Our church will also play the recorded talks Saturday 17th October 9:00-1:00pm. See our Women's Ministry Committee members for more details.

Song – Hymn of the Ages <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBBSQDRInQ4>

1. All history shall bow before Your throne
Time and space on bended knee shall come
Though kingdoms pass away, Your majesty remains
How great You are, how great must be Your song
2. The Alpha and Omega without end
The everlasting makes this wretch His friend
The angels stand in awe, this beggar heart responds
How great You are, how great must be Your song

Chorus: You're the hymn of the ages
The hope of all the world
You carried our redemption on Your shoulders
You're the anthem of salvation
Jesus, Lord of Lords
Your legacy will echo through the ages

3. Oh, for a countless choir in my lungs
To sing Your praises with a thousand tongues

The purpose in my days, is ever to proclaim
How great You are, and how great must be Your song

Chorus

Bridge: We raise the never-ending song
The greatest song we've ever known
The song of angels, the hymn of ages
Holy is the Lord (Repeat bridge)

Chorus

Pastoral Prayer Points

Pray for Democratic Republic of Congo (Population 109 million. Christians 104 million). In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Christians face **severe persecution** in an atmosphere of **violence, abductions**, and the **destruction** of churches. Pray for believers facing violence and displacement for their faith. Ask God to give them hope even when life seems impossible. Pray that the hearts of Islamic extremists are turned to Jesus and their crusade of hatred is replaced by God's peace and joy. Pray that God makes His people peacemakers among the different warring factions in the DRC.

Thanks for our engaged couples. Pray for Sam & Charlotte, Josh & Matisse, Archie & Remy, Elijah & Millie as they prepare for marriage, that they would grow not only in love for one another but above all in their love for Christ, and that their marriages would be built firmly on the gospel and the Word of God. Pray that God would prepare them to make lifelong covenant promises with humility and joy, giving them wisdom, patience and grace as they begin married life, so that their marriages would display something of Christ's faithful love for his church and bring glory to God.

Pray for Hamilton Presbyterian. Thank the Lord for the work that he has done within the Church to revitalise it. Please pray for the new session – David R, Terry O, Cornelius N & David W as they lead the Church to a self sustaining future. Pray for those who have come into the Church from an unchurched background (or who haven't recently been in a Church) that they might come to faith in Jesus and grow in that faith.

Continue to pray for Nepal...

Pray for our young people. Pray for the young people of Australia, that amid the pressures of their generation, they would know the truth of God's Word and come to see Jesus Christ as the one in whom true life and hope are found. **Pray for those who are growing up without a Christian faith**, that God in his mercy would bring faithful Christians into their lives and use churches, families and friends to make the gospel known clearly and compellingly. **Pray for Christian young people**, that they would stand firm in Christ, resist the pressures of the culture around them, and grow in holiness, courage and love.

Bible Reading – Numbers 6:22-27 (NIV)

²² The LORD said to Moses, ²³ "Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: ²⁴ ""The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.'" ²⁷ "So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."

Sermon: Where are blessings found? (Stephen T)

Every year, Australians save up for and go on holidays that they've been dreaming about for months. They are willing to go through the hard slog of work, study, home and family life because of the promise of getting away. To a place where they can rest, be revived and have a great time. But even when you find that great holiday, it doesn't last. Which means we all go back to the daily grind, put our heads down and dream about our next big escape.

The writer of Psalm 84 has found his dream destination. A place where he can rest, be revived and have a great time because it is the place where all of God's blessings are found. So, he longs to be in that place and he even recognises the joy of journeying to that place. Because his destination is not a city or a country, **it is God Himself**. And even the journey that he takes as he makes his pilgrimage towards God's presence brings him great joy. For he is not travelling alone but God's anointed one, his messiah, is travelling with him.

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So, this Psalm will be asking us, where is this joy, where is this happiness, where are these blessings found? And we will find out that God uses that word blessing three times and the word favour once. And those four words give us not only the structure of the Psalm but will open up for us its key message. The place of blessing is God Himself. The path of blessings is found as walk to that destination. For the person of blessing, Jesus the Messiah, walks with us. So, the promise of blessings is assured for all those who put their trust in Him.

Now before we begin, let's think a little about the idea of being blessed. The one who is truly blessed is the one who has found the fullest joy, the deepest satisfaction and the truest purpose in life. Which means they experience joy, not just times of happiness. You see things that make us happy are dependent upon our circumstances. But things that bring us joy can be found in both the good times and bad times in life because we know that all things work for good for those who love God. And that leads to a deep satisfaction because we have found our true purpose in life, to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

So, let's begin, with the fine print of the Psalm. *"For the director of music. According to gittith. Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm."* This psalm is not just a piece of poetry, it was actually written to sing. We are to sing it to God as we come before him in worship. And so, like any worship song it is directed to both the Lord and to the people that we are singing with. It has both a horizontal and a vertical element to it.

And notice it was written by the Sons of Korah. Now there is an Australian Christian group called the Sons of Korah who put the Psalms to music and when you hear these Psalms sung rather than read, they can be incredibly moving. But the original Sons of Korah were the gatekeepers, they were the ancient security guards of the tabernacle & then for the temple.

You know the security guards today are often standing outside the banks or facing the crowd at the big sporting event or helping people to be safe by checking the bags as you go into an important building or concert venue. They are not the important ones. They are not the politicians or the rock stars or the sports stars. Neither were these sons of Korah. They were the plebs. The ones on the outside. But this Son of Korah knew firstly where the

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1. The PLACE of Blessing was found (verse 1-4)

1 "How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty! 2 My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. 3 Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near your altar, Lord Almighty, my King and my God."

This gatekeeper is in love with God's dwelling place. He is obsessed with God's ancient place of worship, the Temple. His whole body, his soul, his heart, his body cries out. Shouts out. Expresses his joy for this building. But it is not really the building that has captured his whole being, it is what this building represents. It represents the very presence of God.

What a joy, a privilege to stand before the Lord Almighty (verse 1). To cry out to the living God (verse 2). To have a God and King who is my God and my King (verse 3). To be part of the history of God's people that goes way back to the God of Jacob (verse 8). To be able to worship the one and true God (verse 8). To enjoy the God who is the source of light and life to his people (verse 11). To have access to one that does not withhold any good thing to those who walk with him (verse 11).

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Friends do you see that joy, that passion, that all-consuming desire to be with his God, that is written here? Is that the same desire you and I have for the Lord? Today did you long to get to Church so you could be in the very presence of the Lord? Do you want to sing, no do you want to shout out loud and express the joy that is currently in your heart? Is this the high point of your week? To connect or reconnect with the living Lord of all the earth? Is there no place you would rather be than be in the presence of the Lord today and every day?

This Son of Korah is even jealous of the birds that are nesting in the temple or maybe the cockroaches that have their home in this Church. They get to stay in God's presence 24/7. This is their home, how blessed are they! But who has found a home here in the courts of the Church, the sparrows! Jesus told his disciples that God cares even for the lowly sparrows & you can buy two of them for a copper coin. These nobodies have found a home with God.

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As have the swallows. The swallows often look like they have ADHD as they flit from place to place, never keeping still for very long. Yet even they have built a nest and found their rest in God's presence. Isn't that a lovely thought? Even the weakest & lowliness & most vulnerable have found a home where they are loved and cared for. And this from a Son of Korah, a humble security guard looking after the temple. For he too has found his place. His home.

Near God's altar. Near the place of atonement. Where a sacrifice is being made to forgive people their sins. Yes, my King and my God wants to draw me near to him. He provides a place of worship where he will be. And he provides the means of worship by shedding blood so that the sins that would keep me away can be completely removed from God's presence.

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Which means, 4 *"Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you."* Where are blessings found? In the very presence of the Lord. For the greatest blessing available is not a good job, a nice home, a loving family, a great holiday, it is God himself.

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But get this, John 1 says that the Word was made flesh and **tabernacled** among us. John 2 says that Jesus, talking about the temple, would destroy it and raise it up in three days because the temple he had in mind was his own body. Which means if we were to update this Psalm by including the truths of the NT, we would say that the place of blessing is Jesus himself. That we should long for, desire, have a passion to live life before the face of Christ.

Because it's true that we wake up in the morning and the presence of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is with us. The Christian then walks through every part of their day with the Lord being right there beside them. We go to bed and he has never left us or forsaken us. So, what this Son of Korah longed for, you & I get to enjoy, every single day. How blessed are we!

That means our lives should be one long unending worship service. Where we sing and shout and praise the Lord in all that we do and say. Where we long for God, long to worship God, long to know God, long to praise God. And on a Sunday that longing simply explodes out from within us, as we gather with more of God's people and we learn more about God from his word, where we enjoy the prayers of others and fellowship with others and are reminded that the greatest blessing of all is God Himself.

Now that is worth pondering on. So, this Son of Korah puts in a Selah. An interlude. A time where the words stop and the music continues so that we ponder that wonderful truth, that we are truly blessed when we dwell in God's presence and praise him. Well, let's stop for a moment and ponder and meditate on that wonderful truth. (Pause)

At my previous Church there was a guy called Jim Wilson. He had a tough life and he was involved in a loveless marriage but he found Jesus through our Church and he just loved being around God's people. He volunteered to do all the cleaning and maintenance of the Church. Every activity we did he was there. Every service was a time of praise & joy for him. And often I need to ask myself and maybe you need to do the same. Why aren't I like Jim?

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The Lord is our source of passion. Our home is with him and his people. Our joy should be living and working and doing life before his face. Jesus is the one who has delivered this particular blessing to you and me on a silver platter. Let's make the most of it every day.

2. The place of blessing and then the **path of blessing (verses 5-7)**

Because there is blessing not just when we reach God's presence but there is also joy in the journey that will take us into the very presence of God.

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5 "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. 6 As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion."

For not everyone lived around the corner from the Temple. Even the sons of Korah, the temple gatekeepers, often lived away from Jerusalem and like FIFO workers came and did their shifts and then travelled back home when it was all over. And so, for most they had to make a pilgrimage to get to the Temple. In fact, every Jewish male had to make that pilgrimage three times each year for the Passover feast, as well as the feast of weeks and the festival of booths.

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So, this Psalm tells us that blessings can be found on the way to the temple as well as at the temple. For God gives his pilgrims strength to complete the journey, even when they have to pass through the Valley of Baca. Now we don't know exactly where that was but the word Baca is similar to the Hebrew word for weeping. So, the idea does seem to be that through those tough times, those desert places, God will give his people the blessing of strength.

In fact, the longer they go through those tough times, the stronger they get. For they go from strength to strength. Each step of the way God provides the strength that they need for the next step. Which means the whole journey is successful not because of the strength of the believer but because of the strength of the believer's God. Today we often celebrate the Aussie who is strong and resilient and self sufficient whereas we who are weak & vulnerable should celebrate the fact that our strength comes not from ourselves but from our Lord.

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But the blessing does not just come to us but also to those who are making that pilgrimage with us and after us. Because did you notice that as the believer passes through the valley of Baca, **they make it a place of springs**, the autumn rains also cover it with pools. The idea is that our journey helps to transform the journey for other believers. God's blessings come to us through our hard times but those blessings can flow through us to others. We understand the difficulties they are going through. We empathise with their weakness and we can point them to the blessings we received in our tough times and that are available to them on their difficult journey as well.

I love the story of the water carrier in India who each day had to walk from the stream to his master's house & he did so carrying two large clay pots, one on each end of a pole across his shoulders. One pot was perfect. It arrived at the house full of water. The other pot had a crack in it so by the time the water bearer reached the house, half the water had leaked out.

This happened every day for **two years**. The perfect pot was proud of itself, but the cracked pot became increasingly ashamed. It said to its carrier, *"I'm a failure. I can't even do the one thing I was made to do. Because of my flaw, my master doesn't receive all the water."*

The water bearer smiled. "Have you noticed the beautiful flowers along your side of the path?" Two years ago, I planted flowers there and so for two years I've been able to pick these beautiful flowers and use them to decorate my master's table. **Without you being exactly as you are, there would be no flowers."**

Friends, perhaps you sometimes feel like a cracked pot. Going through the tough times. Slogging your way through the valley of Baca, but God is using your weakness to bring beauty and life to others along the same path. He is making the tough places a place of springs, where autumn rains cover it with pools for others going along a similar journey to yourself. For there are blessings at the destination, when we get to God's presence but also blessings as we journey towards not the temple in Jerusalem, but the place where there is no temple needed, because God's presence is fully there, heaven itself.

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We are all pilgrims travelling toward the ultimate place of blessing. And for some of us the Valley of Baca is more like a Heartbreak Hill, one we just can't seem to get out of. Life is a struggle. There seems to be no joy around us. So, what do we do on those days? Fix our eyes on our final destination. Ask the Lord for strength for the journey. In the words of Spurgeon: many of God's people find themselves travelling "most of the way to heaven by night." But God will make the journey worthwhile. Because with us is

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3. The Person of Blessing (verse 8-9)

For suddenly & for no obvious reason the psalm veers left field. The Son of Korah prays not for the pilgrim but for the anointed one. 8 *"Hear my prayer, Lord God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob. 9 Look on our shield, O God; look with favour on your anointed one."*

The prayer is that these blessings that come from being in the presence of the Lord, that come from being a pilgrim and travelling to this incredible destination, this favour from God, would be a reality not to himself and others but instead **to the anointed one**. And this changes the direction of the Psalm. For the anointed one at that time was the king, but we know that the one that this Psalm is ultimately pointing to is our King, our Messiah, Jesus.

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Suddenly Psalm 84 becomes wonderfully gospel-shaped. For who is the one who brings us into God's presence? **Jesus**. Who is the one who perfectly walked the pilgrim road? **Jesus**. Who is the one who travelled through his own personal valley of Baca but because of that brought blessings to those who follow him? Jesus. And this means that the blessings of Psalm 84 aren't something we earn by becoming sufficiently spiritual. They come to us **through the Anointed One, Jesus**.

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Ephesians 1:3 says something similar, doesn't it? ³*"Praise be to the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing **in Christ**"*

You see when we are joined to Jesus, we become in Christ, all the goodies that God gives to the Son are automatically available to Jesus' brothers and sisters as well. The access that Jesus has to the father is now available to us through prayer. The forgiveness of sins is ours because of Jesus. The resurrected life is

presented to us because of Jesus. His righteousness becomes our righteousness. His inheritance becomes our inheritance.

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And that thought leads to a second *Selah*. Another interlude. A second time where the words stop and the music continues so that we ponder and meditate on that wonderful truth that it is through Jesus that all these blessings flow. Which means when don't feel particularly blessed, when life is hard and we wonder if God is still with us, then we are to look Jesus. For the promises of blessing is certain through him.

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4. So, what are these certain **promises of blessing**?

10 "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. 11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favour and honour; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. 12 Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you."

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Well, the first promise is that of God's ongoing **presence**. So, firstly this Son of Korah trusts in God's presence. His greatest treasure is not comfort, success or status but being where God is. A single day in God's courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. Now why is that so?

Because God's presence changes the value of everything else. A thousand days can be filled with success, entertainment, travel, possessions and experiences, but if God is absent, they cannot give us what our souls ultimately need. But one ordinary day with God—with his forgiveness, his word, his people and the assurance of his love—is better because God himself is better than all of God's good gifts.

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Which is why we should value God's presence, trust in God's presence also. For the short-term thrills of this world come and go but the real joy of knowing the Lord and being known by the Lord stays. That's why we should value time with the Lord. In prayer. Reading his word. In worship. In Church. Missing out on these things is like cutting off the oxygen for our body. We need Him and the great thing is that we can trust that He is always there for us.

And we can trust in God's **protection** as well. *"For the LORD God is a sun and shield."* It is the Lord that gives light, warmth & life, while also protecting his people from what would harm them. It is not as if everything goes our way & all our prayers are answered with a yes, but what the LORD does promise is that we will never walk alone. God goes before us as our light and he stands around us as our shield. We don't trust God because nothing bad will happen to us; we trust him because nothing can ultimately separate us from his care.

Lastly the writer can trust in God's **provision** of favour and honour. This is not a promise that God will give us everything we want. It is something far better: God will give us everything that is truly good for us. Sometimes his provision is giving; sometimes it is withholding. Sometimes the blessing is the open door; sometimes it is the closed door that protects us from something we cannot see. The psalmist trusts the character of God. And we can also trust in the work of Jesus. And know that God will not withhold any good thing from his children. Indeed, *"Blessed is the one who trusts in you."*

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Conclusion. So where are blessings found? For many its in family or in work or in money or in holidays or even in some sort of spiritual pilgrimage. But none of those things will provide us with what our minds, hearts, souls and bodies truly desire. Those things can only be found in God Himself. As we draw near to him, as we walk along the journey that he has placed before us, as we are accompanied by the travelling companion, that he has provide us with, Jesus, it allows us to trust in his presence, his provisions and his protection.

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That is where blessing is found. And perhaps the best way to finish is with words Christians have sung for centuries: **Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise him, all creatures here below; Praise him above, you heavenly host; Praise Father, Son & Holy Ghost. Amen.**

Friends, our blessings are found not in a place or on a journey or in an experience but in God Himself as through Jesus we come to him, walk with Him and trust Him. So don't just yearn for these things, experience them now through your own personal walk with Jesus.

Song – Christus Victor (Amen) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KF5knxzkCVw>

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| <p>1. O Most High, King of the ages
Great I AM, God of wonders
By the blood You have redeemed us
Led us through mighty waters
Our strength, our song, our sure salvation</p> <p>[Chorus]
Now to the Lamb upon the throne
Be blessing, honor, glory, power
For the battle You have won
Hallelujah! Amen</p> <p>2. O Most High, dwelling among us
Son of man sent for sinners
By Your blood You have redeemed us
Spotless Lamb, mighty Savior
Who lived, who died, who rose victorious</p> <p>Chorus</p> <p>Bridge</p> | <p>With every tribe and every tongue
We join the anthem of the angels
In the triumph of the Son
Hallelujah! Amen</p> <p>3. O Most High, King of the nations
Robed in praise, crowned with splendor
On that day who will not tremble?
When You stand Christ the Victor
Who was, and is, and is forever</p> <p>Chorus</p> <p>Bridge</p> <p>Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen, amen</p> <p>Chorus</p> <p>Bridge</p> |
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Closing. ²⁴ “The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24-26)