

Ephesians 1.15-23; Matthew 25.31-46

I wonder if you are a fan of a cheesy ending. You know the type - when all the problems are resolved, everyone pairs off into blissfully happy couples, mistakes are forgiven, it starts snowing and there's a log fire and upbeat music and every loose end has been tied up with a ribbon. I like a cheesy ending every now and then. But then of course there are other types of end. Some movies roll the credits leaving you with unanswered questions. You never find out if Sandra and Dave get together. There are plot points left wide open, and you aren't left with that satisfying feeling of everything taken care of, instead you're wondering, or puzzling, or perhaps just mouth open and hands going "WHAT?!". Those endings can be perhaps slightly annoying, because we like everything to be resolved, but they are more like real life.

I'm not sure we ever get those sickly sweet Hallmark movie endings in reality. But whichever kind of ending you like, a movie, or book, or theatre production does always have one. We live and move through a world surrounded by endings.

And yet there's one kind of ending that we'll all encounter personally, that probably most of us put

more effort into avoiding than facing, and that is our own end. I don't want to depress you all this morning, but the truth is that eventually, we are all going to die. You and I, as we are now, will come to an end. But we don't like thinking about death. It's sad, it's scary. It seems so very final. But it's the ending that we are all going to get.

And I think if we put aside our squirmish avoidance of the subject, just for a few minutes, it's worth thinking about what sort of ending death might be, and why. Because actually, while it is AN end, for those of us who have faith, who believe in God, we know that it isn't THE end. We believe that there's something more. We believe that there's a second chapter. This is the hope we live into and are called to.

If we really believe that, it should take away our fear of the subject, and it also changes the sort of ending that it is. Instead of a full stop, it's perhaps a colon or a dash - a doorway into the next stage of being. Rather than the end of a film, it's more like the close of the first episode, but you can't wait to see what comes next! Wouldn't that change our attitude, if we thought of life now as simply being the first part of something much bigger? This is the first chapter, the introduction, the bit that hooks you in and asks, 'aren't you excited to see where this is going?!'.

Now, we're talking, of course, about heaven. Now I know some people who are genuinely looking forward to this - heaven is something they can't wait to get to, but I wonder if most of us here this morning are a little more reticent. Perhaps we theoretically pay lip service to the idea, but in reality we are worried that it will be terribly boring, or somehow undesirable. Or it's simply difficult to imagine something other than the life we know and are enjoying here and now. This is certainly true for me - it's hard to be invested in something that we've never seen. We simply don't know in detail what heaven will be like.

I think we *can* be confident that it won't be boring! There won't be harps and floating on clouds unless that's what you're really excited by. But what it will be, for definite, is being with God. This is what we can be certain of.

Being with God. I wonder what that will be like.

You know that feeling of coming home after a long day, or perhaps after being away for a while - you're weary, but when you walk through the door it's a sense of relief and calm, cosiness and safety. Imagine that, but on steroids. Being finally able to totally relax and rest to the depth of your soul, enfolded in the wonder of being with your creator who has loved you for your whole life

long. That's what I think heaven will be like. That's our real ending. That's where we're headed in chapter 2.

And this, my friends, is why Christ is King. Christ is King because we are heading towards being enfolded into God with Christ. Christ is King because nothing else will last. Nothing else will win the day. All of this around us, the things that we spend our time doing, the things that worry and concern us, the struggles and complications of existing in the 21st century, the problems across the world of war and hunger and suffering - none of this will last. At the very end, we will all be in God, come home, in the wonder of being with our creator who has loved us for every moment of existence.

Doesn't that sound like a good ending? Or a good beginning, perhaps. This is the culmination of the Kingdom of Heaven.

For every King needs a kingdom, and Christ's kingdom is this, that he spends all his time teaching the disciples about. The kingdom of heaven - an idea, a way of living, a model of how to be Christ to each other. This kingdom is what links chapter one to chapter two, because it is all around us at every moment.

At the end of the movie V for Vendetta, V is being shot at but strangely survives, and his enemy cries out 'why won't you die?!'. V answers 'you can't kill an idea'. And this is like the Kingdom of Heaven. It is God's idea that Jesus taught us about, an idea of love that manifests the kingdom around us whenever we bring it into being with our words and actions. We are members and co-creators of the kingdom, and it will never end. Chapter one, right here and now, is a little taster of chapter two. If we allow the love of God to fill us and move through us, we proclaim and bring into being the kingdom that will endure past all the endings. We are living witnesses of Christ's kingship, and we know that it will never cease.

It's quite the call, to be someone creating a kingdom, but we are called to it by the King of Kings, so we offer our hearts, minds, and voices, hands, feet and souls, trying every day to treat others as if they were Christ themselves. For with this idea we create the kingdom of heaven, and we are woven into the fabric of God.

So whatever sort of endings you like, don't be afraid of your own. It isn't really the end. Instead we're just going home, and spreading God's idea of Christ's Kingdom as far as possible along the way.

Amen.