

Created to Know God and Abide in Him

Sermon

Based on John 17 and Revelation 21

I. Introduction

Today, we gather under the gentle but insistent call of God, who created us — each one, each heart present here — **out of love and for love**. Our world is filled with voices promising fulfilment, yet the yearning in our souls often persists: Why was I created? What is the purpose? Is it simply to exist, to survive, to succeed — or is there a deeper reason, **older than the stars, more enduring than centuries?**

The theme before us today is both immediate and futuristic: We are created to know God and abide in Him. This is not just a religious slogan or the answer to a dialectic. It is the heartbeat of our existence, echoing through Christ's prayer in John 17 and finding its climax in the vision of Revelation 21. Listen again to these words:

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). **And now from the Gospel according to John to the Revelation:**

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God... And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Revelation 21:3, 5).

From the beginning, God's longing has been to dwell with His people — intimately, joyfully and eternally. And, friends, this longing is not only God's; it is planted in us as well.

II. The Deepest Longing of the Human Heart

Consider the stories we hear, the journeys we take, and the hours we spend in reflection. Behind most human activity — from ancient philosophy to modern psychology — lies a restless search for connection and significance. The human soul has often been pictured as a guest, longing to find a home. St. Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (*Confessions*, Book I, Chapter 1).

Children cry out for assurance and touch. Teenagers seek identity and acceptance. Adults seek lasting love and purpose. The elderly look for abiding peace and hope. These are different melodies, but they harmonise a single song: We were made for relationship. **But not any relationship — we were created for relationship with God Himself.**

In every heart there is a homing instinct, pointing back to the Creator. We may try to satisfy this urge with work, with pleasure, with achievement, or with possessions. Yet, none of these, even the best of them, can finally answer the depth of our desire. As C.S. Lewis wrote, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world" (*Mere Christianity*, Book III, Chapter 10, "Hope").

III. Knowing God: Heart of Our Creation

In John 17, we overhear as Jesus prays to the Father. Notice what He asks — not just for protection, not only for provision, but for oneness, for communion. Jesus prays,

"Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11b).

For Jesus to know God was never just about intellectual knowledge. It is the knowledge shared between friends, the intimacy of a family, the depth of a covenant. God desires for you and me to know Him: not distant, not cold, but close, living, and real. To know God is to know the source of all goodness, the artist behind the beauty of the world, the author who writes our story, the One Who tenderly calls us by name.

We know God, because God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). He intended for people to resemble Him in their nature and character, sharing in qualities like reason, creativity, the capacity for relationship, and moral responsibility. God gave human beings authority and stewardship over the rest of creation — the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, all the animals on earth, and every living thing that moves across the ground. So, God formed mankind in His own image; He created them to mirror His likeness, enabling us to know Him, to hear

Him, and respond to Him.

IV. The Fulfilment: Abiding in Christ

Jesus, in His prayer, does not stop at “knowing about” God. He asks for something even deeper: that we might abide, or “dwell,” in God as God dwells in us. This word “abide” or “remain” means to make one’s home. It evokes Jesus’ earlier words: **“Abide in me, and I in you... I am the vine, ye are the branches” (John 15:4-5).**

This is stunning: God’s desire is not just that we visit Him occasionally, but that His life would flow in us, as sap flows in the vine. That we would draw our identity, our sustenance, our fruitfulness, from our connection with Christ.

To abide is to rest, to trust, to depend, to live every moment in the awareness of God’s presence. It is His Spirit that fills us, shapes us, guides us. We become more than servants; we are friends. More than spectators; **but are participants in the life of God.** “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (John 17:23).

This is not a reward for the spiritual elite; it is the inheritance of every believer. The invitation is to all.

V. The Ultimate Vision — New Creation

Let us lift our eyes to the end of the Scriptures, to Revelation. Here, John is granted a vision not of some distant, abstract heaven, but of God’s presence restoring all things, dwelling with His people. Listen to these astounding words:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea... And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Revelation 21:1, 3).

Here in vivid imagery, we see the end for which you and I were created — to dwell with God, to see Him face to face, to be His children. Every longing, every ache for justice, every hope for a world set right and its fulfilment is here: in the presence of the Lord, who “makes all things new.”

There is no mere spiritual escape, no disembodied resting place. It is the full renewal of all that God dreamed in Creation, and His answer to all the brokenness of the world. He says:

“It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Revelation 21:6-7).

How fitting that in Scripture’s final vision, God’s will to be with us is fulfilled, and our deepest yearning to know and abide in Him is finally answered. That is our destiny. That is the hope beckoning us forward, through every trial, every disappointment, every act of obedience and worship. God created you and me to share His life; He redeemed us to dwell with Him forever.

VI. Barriers to Knowing and Abiding

But if this is our glorious purpose, why do so many feel distant from God? Why does the abiding life often seem elusive, even unattainable? The Bible is honest, there are barriers that have arisen between us and our Creator.

The first and deepest barrier is sin — not just isolated acts, but the condition of mistrust and rebellion that separates us from God. Like our first parents in Eden, we so often turn from the Source of Life and try to carve out our own meaning, our own security, apart from Him. We may hide behind busyness, behind sarcasm, behind pleasure or accomplishment, but the separation remains. Isaiah says, “your iniquities have separated between you and your God” (Isaiah 59:2).

Besides, there are also understated barriers — distractions that fill our hearts and crowd out our awareness of the Divine. We live in an age of endless noise, commotion, chaos and stimulation. Our phones and screens pull us in a hundred directions, often leaving us numb to the gentle voice of the Spirit.

Pride and self-sufficiency are also common stones in the path. **We may be tempted to keep God at a safe distance, to rely on our own strength until circumstances force us to our knees.**

But friends, here is the Good News: God has not left us in our distance. **He did not stand aloof; He came near. He entered our exile in Christ.** Jesus stretched out His arms on the cross to break down every wall — of guilt, of shame, of accusation — that stood between us and the Father’s embrace. In Him, what was lost is restored. As Paul wrote, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Moreover, God has given us His Holy Spirit, to dwell not just among us but within us — a guarantee of our inheritance, a living link to the presence we long for. “Know ye not,” Paul asks, “that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

The way is open. The barriers have been torn down. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...” (Hebrews 10:22).

VII. Living the Abiding Life

When we realise that we were created to know God and abide in Him, the question naturally follows: How do we live out this abiding, day by day? Too often, we confine our faith to the margins — certain times and places — but abiding means weaving our communion with God throughout every aspect of our lives, day and night.

Recall Jesus’ invitation in John 15: “Abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4). This is not a passive waiting, but an active, ongoing choice — a relationship nurtured as all living things are: with time, attention, and love. So, what are some ways we can step more deeply into this reality?

1. Worship and Prayer: Approaching God’s Presence

Worship is the response to God’s worthiness. When we gather for Holy Communion, when we sing hymns, when we kneel in silent prayer, these are not mere rituals — **they are encounters, encounters with a Living God**. Prayer is the breath of the soul, the place where we bring our whole selves — joys, doubts, griefs, gratitude — before the living God. Even our groans and sighs become prayers when offered in faith.

2. Scripture: Listening to God’s Voice

The Scriptures are not just ancient words, not ancient stories, not ancient archives; they are living and active. When we open the Bible, we are opening ourselves to God’s voice. Meditate on His Word — let it shape your thoughts, correct your ways, comfort your heart. As the psalmist prayed, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psalm 119:18).

3. Sacraments: Meeting God in the Ordinary

In our tradition, we have been blessed with the sacraments — physical signs of the invisible grace. In Baptism, we are united with Christ; in Holy Communion, we are fed with His very life. Week after week, as we come to the Table, we are reminded: God’s desire is not to be distant, but to dwell with us, to fill us with His Spirit. When you receive the bread and wine, remember that Christ is offering Himself anew, inviting you to abide in Him.

4. Community: Abiding Together

We were never meant to walk this road alone. Notice that He prays, “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee” (John 17:21). The Christian life is relational, not solitary. Abide more deeply in God as we abide in love with one another.

5. Mission

Abiding in the love of God is not a private possession; it is a calling to live and share God’s love in the world. Jesus prayed that through our unifying love, “the world may believe” (John 17:21). When we serve our neighbour, care for the poor, forgive an enemy, care for those who work alongside us, and speak a word of hope, we are extending God’s invitation to know Him. Each act of mercy, each word of truth, each gesture of compassion is a signpost pointing to the God who dwells with His people.

6. Repentance and Renewal: Returning Again and Again

None of us abides perfectly. We wander, we neglect, we fall. But the gift of the Christian life is that **God’s mercy is new every morning** (echoing Lamentations 3:22-23). Abiding involves continual returning — confession and repentance are not signs of failure but doors back into fellowship with God and men. When we fall, we do not hide, but return. **As Jesus said, “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37b).**

7. Rest and Trust: Abiding in God’s Faithfulness

At its core, to abide is to rest — not in our performance or goodness, **but in the finished work of Christ**. When storms come, when prayers go unanswered, when all we can do is cling in faith, we discover that God is faithful. **Our security is not our hold on Him, but in His hold on us.**

VIII. Conclusion: The Promise and the Hope

Friends, let us never grow weary of this astonishing truth: You were created for God; your soul’s true home is in Him. Christ has prayed for you, died for you, and risen to open the way. The Spirit lives in you as an assurance of what is to come.

One day, the promise of Revelation will be fulfilled in all its richness, glory and holiness. Until that day, abide in His love. Seek Him in the ordinary and the sacred, in joy and sorrow, in worship and witness. Encourage one another, for we journey together towards the city whose light is Jesus.

Let us pray.

Gracious Father,

You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.

Thank You for Jesus Christ, who has reconciled us to You, who prays for us still,

and invites us into Your life of love.

Pour out Your Holy Spirit upon us, afresh,

that we may know You — not only with our minds but with our hearts,

and abide in You all our days.

Renew our desire, deepen our communion,

and make us bold to share Your love with others,

until that day when we see You face to face,

and dwell with You forever.

Keep us steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and fervent in love,

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.