



A sermon for Festal Evensong at Wells Cathedral, celebrating the end of the Cathedral Choir Year, preached on Friday 3 July by the Reverend Canon Tim Stevens, Canon Precentor.

End of Choir Year – Feast of St Thomas

Readings: Job 42: 1-6, 1 Peter 1: 3-12

As we heard our New Testament reading this evening, I wonder how many of us were singing along in our heads to those words “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

A text which is well known to choirs up and down the country, set to music by Wesley, and indeed sung here in this Cathedral on Easter Sunday morning this year.

Whether we have Wesley’s version stuck in our heads now, or not, the message of this passage is the same.

This is the God who has given us new birth into a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which good news comes to us through the Holy Spirit, sent from heaven.

Our reading this evening ended with the notion that all that came before – living hope, new life, salvation, subsequent glory, are things into which angels long to look.

Heaven and angels are something of a theme this evening:

- Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening into the house and gate of heaven. Words from our introit.
- Blest pair of Sirens, pledges of Heavens joy - as our anthem began.
- The hymn we have just sung. Angels again, ever singing, but by the end, earth and heaven together, singing God’s praises.
- And still to come, the longing to sing and take our part with the celestial choir – heaven and angels once again.

The Kingdom of Heaven is central to our Christian Faith. Jesus taught about it more than he did about anything else – by some considerable margin – and if our choristers remember that, it will be a good headstart the next time we spend a Sunday morning together thinking about such things.

But this evening, we have an opportunity to consider earth and heaven together, singing God's praise.

One of our music team challenged me recently, asking whether I would like to have an organ voluntary played at a service which ended very quietly in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

As I considered this, I found myself thinking that being before the Sacrament, we are as close to Heaven as we can come, but if there is no organ, no choir, no music, in Heaven, then perhaps that's not how I envisage Heaven at all!

There are so many references throughout Scripture which back this up. Whether it be angels singing Alleluias, elders with harps singing their new songs, heavenly music sounding like the roar of rushing water, and so many more.

And here on earth, we come this evening to the last service of our choir year.

And just have a look around you. On a Friday evening, when the tennis from Wimbledon is on the television, you are all here, come to worship, come to hear our Cathedral Choir one last time before the Summer holiday.

But it's not just about this evening. This is the pattern of daily life, here in Wells Cathedral. People coming through the doors day by day, because they can come to Evensong, because they can catch a glimpse of heaven, because the music which is sung draws us closer to God than many other things we could choose to enjoy.

I could get myself into hot water if I tried to compare our choristers with the angels of heaven, and so I'll keep that to myself, and leave you to make your own minds up about how to recognise angels when you see, or hear, them.

But what is clear, is that our choristers, scholars, Vicars' Choral, organists – our talented musicians, play a crucial role in helping us to gain that glimpse of heaven, which is promised to us by God the Father, through Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

That is the role of the choir, and that is what you have done day by day, week by week, throughout the year which now comes to an end.

Some of you are finishing your first year of doing this, while others of you have been doing it for a number of years.

Some of you are leaving this evening, and will need to find out how you will continue to do this in the future, to look for new opportunities to grow your skills and talents, while others of you will still be here in September.

But all of you, Mr Parsons and Miss Craig, Vicars Choral, Choral and Organ Scholars, Choristers, and not forgetting chorister parents, grandparents, siblings, chaperones, seamstresses, and of course, Headmasters, house parents, chorister coordinators, and many other school staff have played your part this year in making this Cathedral a place where all who come can catch just a glimpse of heaven.

To those of you who are leaving the choir in a few minutes time, thank you for everything that you have given, and I wish you every blessing in all that you go on to be and do.

To those of you who are not leaving, thank you also for everything you have given, and we as a community here will be looking forward to welcoming you back in September.

But to you all, to the music foundation here in Wells, I would like to say a heartfelt thank you, because what you do, each and every day, joins earth to heaven, supports the mission of this Cathedral, and grows the Kingdom of God.

The Reverend Canon Tim Stevens
Canon Precentor

3 July 2026