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All Saints Day
2019 November 3

Making All Things New

Revelation 21-1:6a

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³I heard a loud voice from the throne say, “Look! God’s dwelling is here with humankind. He will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples. God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” ⁵Then the one seated on the throne said, “Look! I’m making all things new.” He also said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶Then he said to me, “All is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will freely give water from the life-giving spring.

Last week we began getting ready, in earnest, for my mother’s arrival. We started by doing some deep cleaning of the house, creating a welcome poster and purchasing things we know she likes.

I could not help but think, if we can wait and prepare the best for our loved one’s arrival, how is it going to be when we finally are with God? Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you so that where I am you may be also”.

I also think about my mom. I know the trip is long, hard and very tiring. She knew where she was going and she knew who was waiting for her and, because of that, she embraced all the challenges that come for her to travel for nearly 24 hours.

I think it makes a huge difference how you live your life if you know where you are going and who is waiting for you. It affects how you face challenges and how you make decisions.

On Monday Mom texted me, “I am in Copenhagen, I did not receive any



assistance. I have more than two hours until my next flight. Waiting without even knowing where to go”. That’s it. No more messages.

I texted her back -- nothing. I called – no answer. Of course, you worry, you wonder, you pray and you keep on waiting. In my mind I had to say, “There is nothing I can do about it. My worries will not help her or me. I have to put my trust in God and his care.”

Somewhere along our Christian journey, we have to choose to trust. At times, we will find ourselves powerless and have to exercise faith in God alone. On this journey called life, we have lean on God’s promises and know that, if His eye is on the sparrow, He surely watches you and me and we can trust all into His hands.

In Revelation 19, we hear these words: “Salvation, Glory and Power belongs to God.” They do not belong to me, to any other human power, institution or anything that you would like to be. Are you and I able to trust in God alone. If so, do our lives show it? Does it bring relief to you? It does to me.

Today, as we read John’s vision, we are again reminded that God is the giver of life. He is in the business of making all things new. Last Sunday we celebrated new life through baptism. Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling to you and me to enter into new life. The only way you can have new life it is when you die to your old way. Dying is your choice. Giving new life is God’s. We cannot have one without the other.

Sometimes I have to be shaken awake, to realize that all my troubles are because I am still living my way and on my terms. J.D. Walt wrote: “Die before you die, then all is life after that.”

Today is All-Saints Sunday. We remember those who have died. We remember them in the hope and trust we have in God. We thank God for their lives. We praise God for the lessons we learned from those who have crossed the Jordan River ahead of us.

At the same time, we face the reality that we all are closer today than we were yesterday to leave this life. It is a good time to stop and reflect. Do I know where I am going? How should I change the way I live?

Jesus said: “Blessed are pure in God for they shall see God.” Jesus also said: “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord! will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter”.

Last Spring my mother said that when she got back to Lithuania she would keep a suitcase in the living room so she would be reminded that she will come again. She started to pack long before the day of leaving. What would life look like if I truly believe in the life after life?



John sees, in his vision, a new heaven and a new earth. Why new? Because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. They are gone. God is not just fixing and patching. The past is over and gone. The old is no more. All is new. God has re-created.

I am a fixer. I try somehow to make it work, make it happen. Maybe I can use duct tape, some glue or sew a patch. God is not going to fix here and there. God is making all new.

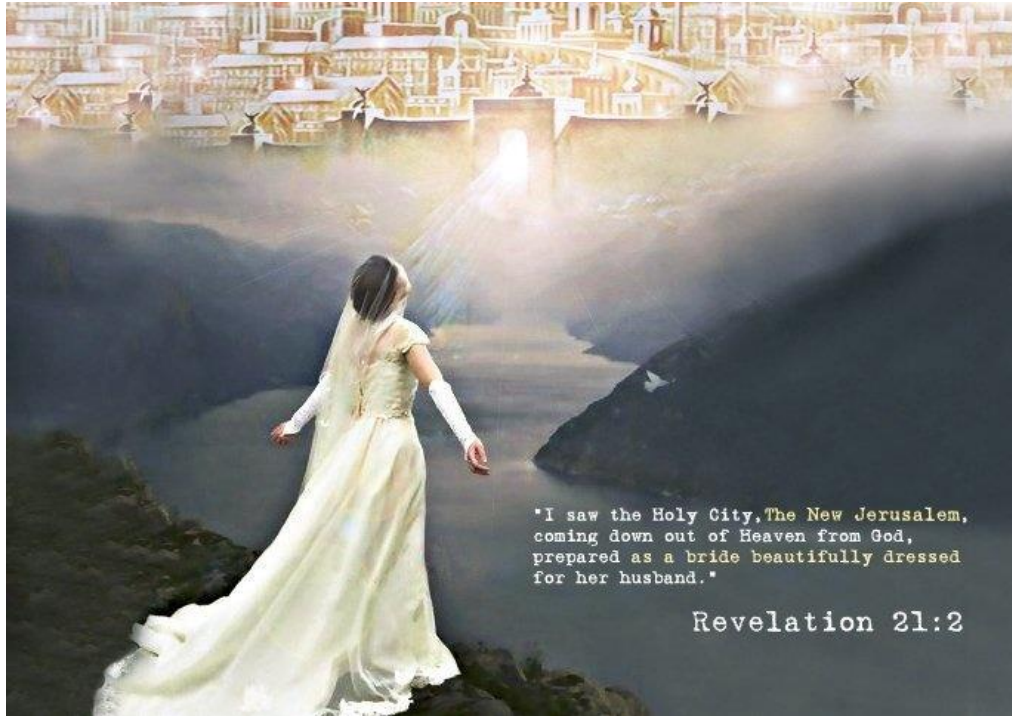
Remember Jesus' words: "Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear?" I am reminded, again, that all I treasure here will be gone. All things will disappear. So how do I change my life knowing that truth? Where am I investing my time, my love, my heart?

My mother loves fresh apples. So we took action. We went to Pleasant View orchard and picked apples.

Waiting and trusting is not about being passive. Actually it is very opposite. If you want all of God's promise to be true for you, you live and practice God's kingdom now. Yes, we have a vision of heaven after we die. We sing "In the sweet by and by we shall meet on that beautiful shore", but the Good News is God's kingdom is here, now and within you.

C.S. Lewis wrote: "A continual looking forward to the eternal world is not a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history, you will find that Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next".

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more". The sea represents the dark force of chaos which threatens God's plans and God's people. I believe the Bible is saying there will be no evil. There will be no place for the devil. I think it is so beautiful that in the last two chapters of the Bible and in the first two chapters there is no mention of the devil. Revelation 20 says he is in the lake of fire, where he will be imprisoned for all of eternity.



² I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

This where I really need to stop and read again. Holy City, New Jerusalem, Bride, God's church is doing what? Coming down out of heaven from God. The image we carry is that we are going up there – not the Holy City is coming here. We talk about being with God in heaven. Right?

Verse 3: "I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "Look! God's dwelling is here with humankind. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them as their God". God is coming down to be with the people. God will dwell with people. Isn't that the opposite from what we think? I will be with God. We all be there with God. We will go there

The loud voice from God's throne commands John to write these things down "for these words are trustworthy and true."

Isn't it amazing how we get set in our way of thinking. God brings the Church, the bride of Christ, into a new earth. God comes to be with people in that new earth. If you think it is just the apostle John who sees this vision, listen to the prophet Ezekiel: "My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people" and hear what Zechariah says: "Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the LORD.

In our Bible study we read about the prophet Hosea. God told him to marry a woman who is not faithful. He is told to love her. God says: "This is how I feel. My

people are like Gomer. They are not faithful to me.” Hosea’s marriage is symbolic of God’s covenant relationship with Israel. Through Hosea, the Lord tells the story of Israel’s disobedience, His discipline and His steadfast, faithful love.

At last, in Revelation, we see that the church, the Bride, comes and she will receive that infinite love. In the final picture we will love God faithfully and perfectly.



God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” God is not going to have an angel to do it. God will not send someone to wipe away our tears. Can you imagine feeling God’s touch? Can you imagine knowing the fullness of God’s love? There will be no more tears, no more pain and no more death.

In verse 5 God says again: “Look! I’m making all things new.” He is already at work. He is already, by the Holy Spirit, making all things new. We do not have to wait for the final stage. Praise God! We can already experience His touch, His love, his grace and live a life in Him. In Him we find our strength in and hope when we our loved ones are no more with us.

Then he said to me, “All is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will freely give water from the life-giving spring.” All is done. He has created everything new.

There is a song not in our hymnal which most of you probably know. The chorus goes like this:

*And Jesus said, "Come to the water, stand by My side,
I know you are thirsty, you won't be denied;
I felt ev'ry teardrop when in darkness you cried,
And I strove to remind you that for those tears I died."*

God has the water of life. Are you thirsty for His water? Jesus told the woman at the well, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

It is my prayer that we all recognize our thirst and receive the water Christ offers by choosing and living a life with God now. We will see him walking with us and our joy will be complete.