

I AM MAKING ALL THINGS NEW
NOVEMBER 3 AND 4, 2018
REVELATION 21: 1-6a

When C S Lewis wrote his book *A Grief Observed* about the death of his wife, Joy, after only four years of marriage, he said,

The death of a beloved is an amputation.

I wonder how many of you have felt like that after your loved one died? We don't just lose someone we love; we lose part of ourselves. The loss of loved ones can be devastating for those left on this earth. We are not immune from the bleakness of death. It does feel like part of us has been amputated, a part of us is missing. In the midst of suffering, loss and devastation, we come to seek a word of hope.

Although at times the book of Revelation can be strange and perplexing, *it* is actually a word of hope addressed to churches in Asia Minor that were suffering persecution by the Roman government. Their suffering was perhaps different from ours in that it was religious persecution. However, that persecution led to separation from and in many cases the death of loved ones. In that respect we can find a common feeling with them as they are seeking a word of hope in the midst of devastation.

The author of Revelation sees a world torn apart by sin, evil and death, and a God who wants to put it right. The author's message can be summed up in three words: Hang

in there! Yes, things are bad ... and they may get worse. But, the Good News is God's in charge, and it's God who will have the last word. So, keep the faith and never lose sight of the vision for which we strive: The Kingdom of God on earth.

Solomon got it right in Proverbs 29: 18 when he said, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." What I'd like for us to think about this morning is the flip side of the coin: "Where there IS vision, there IS hope."

Picture the vision the author of Revelation casts, as he writes:

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth:
for the first heaven and the first earth have passed away,
and the sea is no more.

I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.

I heard a loud voice out of heaven
saying, 'Behold, God's dwelling is with people,
and he will dwell with them,
and they will be his people,
and God himself will be with them as their God.

He will wipe away from them every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;
neither will there be mourning,
nor crying, nor pain, any more.

The first things have passed away.”

What a comfort it is to know that God is present with us, and plans to be with us throughout all eternity, that our whole existence is framed by the presence of God. And God will wipe away every tear. Not only the tears we shed now, but every tear ever shed, every pain ever felt, throughout the entire history of humankind, will be erased. Not only the tears we weep, but the tears we cause, will be gone.

And then as if that isn't enough, we hear these powerful words in the next verse:

“Behold, I am making all things new.”

No matter how bad things are in the world around us – or in our personal lives – God has the ability to restore peace and beauty. As we live in the world today, these ancient words still ring true and we can't lose sight of that vision of hope.

But, restoration projects sometimes take longer than we would like. Anyone who has ever worked to restore an old house or a piece of furniture to its original state, can understand that. Those projects can also be pretty uncomfortable, as we have to accommodate while changes are being made.

But the projects do reach completion. And the same is true as God continues to work in the world to make all things

new and to bring that vision of the kingdom of God on earth.

In the world today, it can seem like progress is pretty slow, though. With each natural disaster, each mass shooting, each medical diagnosis, each death of a loved one, each division in our church, our nation, our world we want to cry out “How long, O Lord?”

It might be a long wait. So, what do we do in the meanwhile?

I think that just as in any restoration project, we can actively envision what is to come and participate in the work of restoration. We are called to partner with God in ways that will allow the power of God to be experienced in this world. If we know that God is going to make all things new and wipe away every tear, then we can prepare the way for that world. We can remember that life and the world will not always be this way.

We can keep this vision before us:

“Behold I am making all things new.”

A new world order will come about when human beings, particularly the God's church is involved in this new creation. We can live by the values of God's new world in small ways. We can seek to bring hope to others. We can comfort other grieving people with the comfort we have received. We can play our little part in building a new world where hatred and suffering do not always win.

It is no secret that we live in a broken and fallen world. Sin and evil lurk around every corner. The world around us is changing so fast, sometimes we feel like strangers in our own home towns.

But it's also no secret that Christ died for the sins of the whole world. Christ's desire is for all to become a new creation in Him. Let that be the vision that inspires us to look for signs of God's presence in the faces of each person we meet.

We can't lose sight of Christ and his kingdom; and the vision for which we strive each time we pray the Lord's Prayer: They kingdom come they will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

If we think it sounds unrealistic to think that the kingdoms of this world could become the kingdom of God, remember the words of George Bernard Shaw:

“You see things as they are and ask, Why?
I dream things that never were and ask, “Why not?”

Keeping the vision of Christ and his kingdom alive allows us to be confident that Christ is at work even now reconciling the world to himself and blessing us with the gifts of his grace and love.

Where there is vision, there is hope.

God is faithful and creation is not being abandoned, but it is being transformed. The former things, the evils that cause

pain and suffering in our current world, those will be gone forever. Oppression, deceit and sin – all that will be gone, and gone for good.

“Behold I am making all things new.”

Thanks be to God, who gives us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

O Lord, who makes all things new, we are weary of doing things the old way, our own way, the way that leads to suffering and pain and death. Change us, God. Transform us. Make us new, so that in the meanwhile our desire is to work with you to bring your Kingdom on earth. Forgive us for all the tears we have caused, and wipe away all the tears we have shed. Help us to welcome your Kingdom as it comes in its fullness. Amen.