

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Fifth Sunday of Easter - Year C

Acts 11:1-18

Psalm 148

Revelation 21:1-6

John 13:31-35

05/19/2019

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

31When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. 32If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 33Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ 34I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. 35By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The Gospel of our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Something New

Good morning! Two weeks ago the Rev. Kelly Bayer Derrick, the Assistant to the Bishop, was here and preached on Revelation. She pointed out that so often people are afraid or intimidated by the last book of the Bible, and that it was really a book of hope. This is something I've been trying to tell people for years, and nowhere else is that more evident in this book than in our second reading today:

1I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

4he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.”

5And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.”

In just a few short verses we get some of the most beautiful and most memorable lines throughout the whole Bible. Alpha and Omega, the New Jerusalem, making all things new, they're all right here in Revelation. (A quick lesson, most people seem to make the mistake of adding a "s" to the end of Revelation. There is no "s," it's Revelation not RevelationS.) Just like Psalm 23 from my sermon last week, we hear this section of Revelation most often at times of death. That makes sense, we have those wonderful words of hope, promising a time when death, pain, and suffering will be no more, and God will wipe away every tear from every eye. But this text isn't about death at all! It's about life! New life! Don't believe me? Just take a look at verse 5: "*See, I am making all things new.*" And we're told right in the beginning, John, the writer of the book sees a new heaven and a new earth. No, it's not about death at all, but about the new life that Christ brings to all of us. This life comes with the destruction of the sea in verse 1 and the new waters of life in verse 6. Ronald J. Allen, professor emeritus of preaching at Christian Theological Seminary points out that: "*As every first-year seminary student quickly learns, the sea in Jewish literature is sometimes a symbol of chaos. In the new world, the destruction of the sea means that chaos is no longer possible.*"¹

If all this sounds so great that you feel like you're missing out, don't fret! Most of us have gotten a taste of that new life, and Roger will join our ranks here soon when he is baptized and marked with the cross of Christ forever. So often in our lives we forget that in the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, in the earthly elements of water, bread, and wine, we are given a "foretaste of the feast to come." In those

¹https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4062

moments we don't need to look for hope, we simply need to close our eyes and experience all the joy that God has planned for each of us. The sacraments become teasers for an experience that we will all enjoy one day.

The Rev. Kelly was right, you don't need to be afraid of the book of Revelation. I know that there are places where it can get confusing, but heck, what good book doesn't confuse us a time or two. We find ourselves in the Fifth Sunday of Easter, and now is the perfect time to celebrate the hope and joy that the promise of Easter affords us! So, I want you to close your eyes for a few minutes, and experience once again the new thing that God is doing:

1I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

4he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.”

5And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, *“Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6Then he said to*

me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."

Amen.