

Sunday, May 15, 2022 – Fifth Sunday of Easter

“All Things New”

Revelation 21: 1-7

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Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Brain research is showing us that God has hardwired the human brain to desire novelty. You may scarcely remember the drive to or from the church on any given Sunday morning, but do that drive at night in the dark, or in the rain, and you'll remember it longer. It's a new experience. And as we age, new experiences, whether it's picking up a new hobby or doing a Sudoku puzzle help to keep our mind sharp for years to come. Same with gifting new things... a new gadget that helps you do things you weren't able to do before, or a new item to replace another that has seen better days. Isn't that the appeal of the new, after all? What's new is going to be clean. Durable. Perhaps of higher quality.

You may have noticed the world around us is in need of some renewal. How did it get to this point? Let's take a nostalgic walk, beyond the span of our “blink of an eye” length lifetimes and look from God's perspective at the history of all humanity, indeed, of His whole creation. We see God making all things new – and He affirms, confidently after each thing being created that it was “good.” That good creation includes the crown of His creation, the caretaker creatures who have a special, personal relationship with their God – man and God, who have fellowship with each other. The creation was good, new, sparkling, perfect – until a cancer entered in, in the form of temptation from a malcontent creature, literally hell-bent on disfiguring God's masterpiece. Like cancer cells multiply – like water damage leads to mildew and mold and rust, like bacteria cause decay and decomposition, like waves erode coastlines and hillsides, so did sin spread, branching out over God's good earth in root systems of weeds, in chaos, in disarray and in hatred and malice in the hearts of man. So severe was the septic spread of this sin disease God once washed it away an incomprehensible volume of water, to start anew. The disease though persisted, and many of the descendants of Noah fell to trusting in themselves, their own notions of new progress and their new handmade idols.

Despite this great wickedness and abject disobedience to the creator of it all, it's only by God's own hand that the world keeps turning at all. God continues to work in His world today. First, He does this through creation. He sustains the lives of all, even those who do not acknowledge Him. For anyone who has anything to support their body and life, even the air they breathe, it comes solely by God's providing. It's a creative act of God continuing in the world and purely an act of His grace that children are born, that animals and plants reproduce for food, that rain falls on our fields and that we receive supplies to build our homes. Everything we eat and use, from the most basic tool to the most complicated computer, has its origin as a byproduct of life or from the minerals in the earth.

Second, God continues His good work for His creation by paying a price to buy back all that which was tarnished by sin – for God was not content to simply throw His creation and His creatures into the proverbial dumpster and start anew. Instead He sent His one and only Son to collect the dirt, the grime, the sin, the shame onto His own self at the cost of His blood and His life. Every person infected by this disease finds themselves healed in Jesus Christ.

Third, God is rebuilding our hearts, day in day out through our baptism to want to do His will in this world. It's yet another way God continues caring for His creation, by guiding His people and making them holy to live their lives for Him.

All to say – God's care for His creation – for you and me – continues today – for we too are being made new. By grace, He continues to provide for all living creatures. By grace, He purchases us back from sin death and the devil by the blood of His Son. By grace, He works patiently and constantly in the hearts of believers to mold us and guide us to live ever more like He desires – He gives us a brand new life, a new heart that wants to fear, love and trust in Him above everything.

But this day, we also look forward to the fullest expression of God's new and righteous rule to come on the Last Day. We look forward because as much as God continues to care for a creation that has betrayed Him, as much as He has sent Jesus to take away our sin and make us righteous in His sight,

which has already happened, as much as God recreates our hearts to desire to love and serve Him in all we do, it's an ongoing renewal. A work in progress. From God's perspective, it's complete – our being saved is a fact. But from our perspective, we're left waiting, waiting to experience, in full the life that God has already prepared for us. Why is it not here yet, in that way? Because God wants all people to be saved and quite simply, there are still more people who need to hear that message. Many here before you today knew Jesus before they became members of our congregation. And yet there are many others out there in Las Vegas who do not know that good news of Jesus.

By good news, I mean this: a day is coming when we will experience not only God's newest but His best of everything. There will be no decay. It will not grow stodgy or boring over time. The newness to come will be preserved entirely forever. No death, no mourning or crying or pain – the old order of things will have passed away.

You know, this is simultaneously the most important thing there is to point toward for hope in our Christian life, and the most challenging for people to feel is relevant. Perhaps you're thinking, "Yes, I know, Jesus is going to return, everything will be great forever and I'll live happily ever after – no end. But what's that mean for today?"

It matters for today because those things God makes new already are dim glimpses of a profoundly greater reality that is already ours. Every time you give thanks for what God has provided, though not all is right – every time you hear, "I forgive you all your sins," the confidence only a blameless person could have before God is yours already today. Every moment of your life the Holy Spirit is working and living in you since your baptism, and even when you stammer through an opportunity to talk about Jesus to someone, or struggle with forgiveness but keep at it, the Holy Spirit uses that anyway and makes us effective for His work.

The newness and good God is working for us right now is great. It points to something even better. The Father, the one seated on the throne, makes this promise, "I am making everything new!

Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” He said, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be His God and he will be my son.”

Jesus has overcome and inherited all this – with the goal of making us new. Amen, come, Lord Jesus, as we are reminded this day of the new heaven, new earth and new bodies that are ours through You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.