

Behold, He Is making all things New!

Revelation 21:1-7

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

John declares that in his vision of the revelation of Jesus Christ that he saw a new heaven and a new earth. What a sight that would be. What a picture! A new heaven and a new earth where there will no more tears, no more mourning and crying and pain. Our second reading starts with, Then I 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. And I saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

This vision first given to John and then passed on to other churches, was written to help the discouraged and disheartened Christian church. The exhilaration of Easter was past, it had been years since Jesus rose from the dead and now the early Christians were fighting in a life and death struggle to hold on to their hope and promise and trust in Christ. There were persecutions by the Roman emperor and harassment from their pagan neighbors. It is true that the resurrection of Easter was the most important event of history and changed the world, For a couple of decades eye witness accounts were being told and the Church was growing by leaps and bounds. But now time had continued to move on, the rapture and end of time didn't take place in a matter of a few years. Christ had not returned and some of that first generation were beginning to die. People were wondering what this all meant. Why the persecution, why the suffering, why must the world hate Christians so much and seek to destroy them. They looked for hope and promise because they were now facing life times of struggles.

Even John, to whom this vision had been given, had been exiled to the island of Patmos, the island prison of the Romans. The sea separated him from those whom he loved and from the church he served. As he looked out over the surrounding sea his heart ached for his fellow Christians. He would receive news and letters of the hardships they were being put through for the sake of the Gospel message. They were facing unspeakable tortures and deaths to stay faithful to their confession of faith. The Celebration and Joy of Easter must have seemed far away, even perhaps some maybe were thinking it was just wishful thinking. Do you ever feel that way?

Here we are a month after Easter Sunday. The Easter Celebration already seems such a long time ago. And now we're back to the routine of Spring, summer is coming on fast,

people are making plans, Sunday school is ending and VBS is bring planned. The holy day of Easter is past and we are at our daily work, struggling to make ends met and take care of the house and the family and back aches and head aches and whatever else is going on in your life this week.

And yet in the midst of all this, God gives us a vision, a promise that is so marvelous, so wonderful it simply goes beyond our wildest imagination. What a picture it would be!

It is nothing less than a totally new creation, an utterly new paradise in which everything that is wrong will be made right there, a world in which "God dwells among humans. God is with us, next to us, wiping away every tear from every eye. What a vision! What a picture!

So what does this great vision of John's of a new heaven and a new earth, a new Holy City mean for us? Does this vision make any difference for people that are struggling with the death of a child? Does this vision make any difference for people that are mourning the loss of a spouse to cancer? Does this vision give hope at all to a family that has been ripped apart by violence, war, death, disease, or devastation? What about a child dealing with a dysfunctional family, where there is violence or neglect or even worse abuse both physical or verbal, does this vision help them? To create wishful dreams about a possible future, to want so bad to change things and make everything right, to get a second chance, to close our eyes and hope that we can turn back the clock just doesn't help.

What helps is knowing the words of the one who is seated on the throne, "Behold I am making all things new." Then he says "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." It is not wishful thinking, it is not make believe. Christ says he is making all things new. Not has once and forever, not will sometime down the road, but **he IS making all things new!**

Just a few weeks ago we were talking about the sacrificial lamb, Jesus Christ, the Son of God who was stripped, beaten, humiliated, and nailed on a cross to die, And now we know and believe that he sits enthroned in glory next to the Father and Creator of the universe. This is the Son who knows what it's like to suffer and die. This is the one who knows what it's like to be helpless. This is the one who knows what pain is, what it means to be hurt and insulted,

what it means to be humiliated and rejected. This Lamb, Jesus, is the one gives hope in the face of all the worries and hurt that life in this world brings. He is the Son, The Christ, the Messiah who has overcome all things and has been given the power and authority over all things in heaven and one earth, where not even death can separate us from him ever.

Revelation shows us a vision of a new heaven and a new earth where Christ now rules in glory. "Behold I am making all things new."

Here Christ is offering us something that is so unknown in this present world. He is creating a new heaven and a new earth, a place where those who have had nothing but tears and grief in this world, shall laugh, and sing because "God himself will be with them as their God. he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

This vision is given to emphasize to those Christians who are suffering and dying because of their faith that, in spite of what it may seem, God's new creation has begun, IT HAS BEGUN and will one day BE FULFILLED. Then, the old will disappear completely leaving only God's new creation.

Not just the earth and the land and building and such but everything, A new creation. When Jesus says, "*I am making all things new!*" that also includes every relationship with others right now. He has made us new through the blood of the Lamb, and that newness controls us in the way we regard others. Jesus has given us newness through the forgiveness he has won for us on the cross. He wants us to share that forgiveness with one another. To love one another as he has loved us.

Jesus has made us new. That newness is to be reflected in the way we treat members of the family of the church. Just as God keeps on renewing us every day, so also we are to keep on renewing the relationships we have with others through forgiveness, putting the hurt behind us and not holding it against the other person forever. We are to be seeking this new thing that God has begun and is completing. We are being made new, to rise from the forgiveness of sins as we hear the words of absolution and remember our baptism and receive the bread and wine and go forth from here changed, cleansed once again and made new. "See, I am making all things new" It has begun, it is being fulfilled. Let us give thanks and praise him for this promise, this hope, this joy until we stand before his throne with the great multitude. Let us continually be made new as servants, witnesses of God's love. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come. AMEN.

Rejoicing in the glory of the resurrection dawn, let us pray for the church, the world and all of God's creation,

Lord Almighty, we gather as your family this day, as your community of faithful, made new in your ever fulfilling promise of salvation. We give thanks to you for that freedom that grants us hope and joy and promise as a part of your everlasting kingdom. Join us to you, connected through your son, the lamb who sits on the throne, grant us the Spirit of praise and witness of the glory due your name.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

Lord we ask that you turn your healing power upon this world. To end war, to lift up peace and joy. To bring freedom and love where there is oppression and distress. Where there is disease send your spirit of healing. Where there are disasters that threaten your people and all of creation, bring about hope. May your Spirit wash anew upon this world, cleansing and making all things new.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

Gracious Father, we pray for your Holy Church. As servants of Christ we are connected to you, as your witnesses bearing fruit of faith in you. As a family of God here at St, Mark may you shine upon us with your glory and guide us in doing the work you have called and commanded us to fulfill. Guide us in reaching out to all people to share your word and your grace. Empower us to carry within us the spirit of your love so that we may share as your witnesses here and in all places.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, we know of many in this world that need to come into your presence. That need to feel that freedom from pain, from guilt, from sickness, from fear, from anxiety and worry. Lord comfort all those who are in need this day. Grant your healing spirit to lift up the afflicted, to strengthen those facing adversity, to stand beside those who are alone, to give hope to those who are depressed. Be with all those that will be dealing with physical and mental anguish and grant them healing. With prayerful minds and heavy hearts we lift up all those needs and remember before you all those who are hospitalized, shut-ins, hurt and forgotten, and especially.....We lift them up before you and remembering them as we pray their names before you this day, gather them and heal them in your loving arms.

Into your hands, O God, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.