

Revelation Part 4 – Conclusion – “There Will be no more Night”
April 7, 2024, Rev. Brian R. Louis, Faith Presbyterian Church
Revelation 22:1-5

22 Then the angel^[a] showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life^[b] with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; ⁴they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Holy Wisdom, Holy Word.

A new pastor was visiting in the homes of his parishioners.

At one house it seemed obvious that someone was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks at the door.

He took out a business card, wrote 'Revelation 3:20' on the back of it and stuck it in the door.

When the offering was processed the following Sunday, he found that his card had been returned. Added to it was this cryptic message, 'Genesis 3:10..'

Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he broke up in gales of laughter.

Revelation 3:20 begins 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.'

Genesis 3:10 reads, 'I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid for I was naked.'

Today is Bright Sunday where we continue in our celebration of the Risen Lord in this season of Eastertide. The Bright Sunday tradition at Faith began to keep the energy, optimism, and vibrancy going in the church to try and avoid too much of a letdown after Easter Sunday. The bright colors of the quilts made by church members and their families cover the pews. And it's also a way for folks to dress up in their most colorful clothes. Bright Sunday is also appropriate for the conclusion of our Revelation journey today.

Let's first recap a little of what we learned about the Revelation to John. First, we learned that the book of Revelation was a book written to seven churches in what is modern Turkey. In part, Revelation was written to bolster and encourage them as they were going through difficult times. Each church had its own challenges, including persecution because of their faith.

We learned about the importance of symbolism in Revelation, how certain evil creatures and beings in the book were symbols for the Roman empire. Revelation is also full of references and imagery from the Old Testament, indicating clearly that the author of Revelation knew Hebrew Scripture.

We heard about dragons, and a lake of fire, and all sorts of horrible creatures and places. And now, we come to the latter part of the book, the conclusion of the Revelation to John. In Chapter 21, leading up to today's reading, we read about John being taken away by an angel to see the arrival of the new Jerusalem. The Holy City comes down out of heaven from God, the street of the city is pure gold, clear as glass. There is no need for sun or moon for God is the city's light, and its lamp is Jesus, the Lamb of God. "Nothing unclean will enter it nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood but only those written in the book of life" will enter and live in the Holy City.

In our reading this morning, there are more scenes of the new Jerusalem. There is a bright river, bright as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God. There is a tree of life, with leaves to heal the nations, and nothing accursed will be found anymore. The Lord's servants will see God's face, and God's name will be on their foreheads. There is no more night.

The new Jerusalem is the place of promise from God. A place of hope, a heaven, a place where we will reside with God forever. Where we see the face of God, whose face has been hidden from humanity.

David Aune writes that "John sees aspects of the New Jerusalem based on traditional Jewish conceptions of the three central features of Eden: the throne of God, the river, and the fruitful tree of life."¹ Aune continues, "The servants of God are finally able to see him (ordinarily unachievable)" and God's "name is on their foreheads because they belong to him forever."²

Brad Munroe's comforting interpretation of this part of Revelation goes like this, "Fear will disappear like the morning mist, never again to hold hostage the heart. The light that brings security and peace, that shields the heart with shalom, will be The Glory and the Lamb, who will reign sovereign above the Cosmos forever and ever."³

John wants to offer hope and encouragement to the churches that are struggling in Asia Minor. The ending of Revelation is enveloped in that hope. And it has offered the same message of hope throughout the 2000 years since its writing.

¹ David Aune, "Revelation," *Harper's Bible Commentary*, 1318

² Aune, 1318,

³ Brad Munroe, *Rhythms of the God-Life*, 2023, 337

It reminds us of the hope that we experience in the Resurrection story of Jesus. This Eastertide we are glowing in the hope of spring, in the hope of the raising of Jesus from the dead, the optimism that death, gloom, darkness, and sorrow do not have the last word on our lives. It is also the message of hope that horror, sadness, and despair do not have the last word in our world. We have hope in the Resurrection, the hope that God will make all things new. The promise from God of a New Jerusalem.

It's hard to feel and sense that hope in our world. Wars in Europe, the Middle East, geopolitical tension, chaos in Haiti, the difficulty of the United States to handle the migration of people from central and south America, an angry and fractured population in our country, in our state. This is all true. We are not hiding our heads in the sand and ignoring that there are not grave problems in the world.

But we are also Easter people. We are children of God, children of hope. The people who hope in the Resurrection, the hope of a renewed world someday, the command from God to start remaking the world the best we can here and now. That remaking of the world comes from a kind word or a smile. The giving of money to the One Great Hour of Sharing to relieve suffering in parts of the world devastated by natural disaster. Attending the Dixieland Devotionals and donating money to help those who need a hand in our area.

Our challenge is to live that life of Resurrection for others to see so people can see us as Christians trying to relieve suffering and help build up the kingdom of God. To act with hope, and not despair. To act with optimism and love, and not gloom and resentment.

I encourage you when you are feeling down, despairing, sad, for the state of the world, and perhaps even your life, to turn to the parts of Revelation where the hope of God comes through loud and clear. I pray that you open the book and feel the hopeful wonderful imagery in your heart that can be found in Revelation.

Revelation is not all a mysterious, indecipherable book of the Bible. It is ultimately a book of hope and a book of love. It is a story of the love of God for God's people.

Our Brief Statement of Faith says, "With believers in every time and place, we rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever." Amen.