

Easter 5C 15 May 2022
Revelation 21:1-6
St Peter's Lutheran Church Elizabeth
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Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Amen.

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See [Behold], I am making all things new." Let's pray:

Don't we just adore things that are shiny and new! Our children's eyes light up with excitement as they contemplate new treasures teasingly concealed at the foot of the Christmas tree. Their very short-lived human nature loves the next new thing. In this respect, we're all like children because we demand instant gratification, the latest news, and we're easily distracted by the many "inventions of the hour". Novelty always fascinates.

And at the same time, we worship a God who is unchanging and whose years have no end. And it's true that in some matters, old is better. For example, the old, old gospel is the newest thing in the world; by its very essence it's forever good news. Where things relate to God, the new is always old. Man constantly strives to concoct a new doctrine or new truth, but it's soon discovered that the new dogma is only a worn-out heresy cleverly rebadged. In the matters of greatest importance; truth and godliness, you'll always find that 'there is nothing new under the sun' (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

That doesn't leave us without hope. We suffer so much from the evil embedded in our nature, the sins of our old life and past, the torments of the old temptations, that we're not distressed by the belief that old things are passing away. Our heads lift and hope excites our souls at this utterance from the lips of our risen and reigning Lord: "See, I am making all things new." It's fitting and right that our old, sinful nature should make way for holiness and righteousness.

These words are truly divine. “Behold, *I* am making.” Who is this great “I”? Who else but the eternal Son of God? Who can make but God, the Maker [Creator] of heaven and earth? It’s his prerogative and his alone, to make and to destroy. “Behold, I am making *all* things.” This is an emphatic, all-encompassing “all”. Nothing escapes the sphere of God’s creative will. “Behold, I am making all things *new*.” “Behold, I am shining the splendour of my goodness into your souls!” Lord Jesus, thank you for calling us into your new creation. Thank you for allowing us to be made new alongside “all things.” Thank you for the marvel of your renewing love.

This renewing work has been in our Lord’s hands from ancient times. We were under the old covenant which our first father, Adam, broke. The old covenant basically said, “If you keep my commands you and all your descendants will live, but if you eat of the tree which I have forbidden, you and all generations that follow, will surely die” (Genesis 2:16,17). We yielded to deception and temptation, leaving us broken, wounded, even slain by the Fall; evicted from the garden of Eden - destroying our communion with God and each other (Genesis 3). We died in Adam, spiritually, leaving us bound to evil which reigned in our flesh. We were like the deserted infant described in Ezekiel [16:5], unswaddled, unwashed, abhorred, and left to die.

Thankfully, Jesus passed by and saw our pitiful condition. In his wondrous love, our Lord Jesus protected us under a new covenant, a covenant in which he became the second Adam, a covenant in which he met the demands of God’s perfect Law, obediently shed his blood that we may not perish, and we now live because he is risen.

Now that our Lord Jesus has fulfilled the covenant contract and lives, we enjoy a guarantee of pure promise without condition or risk. We can’t invalidate this new covenant because it never depended on us in the first place; only on Jesus who is our judgement before God. The demand was made of Jesus and he met it. Jesus took on and completed our side of the ledger and now no debt remains. All that remains are unconditional promises which are guaranteed to all who follow him. Today we’re under the new covenant which says, “I will be merciful towards their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more” (Hebrews 8:12). It’s not, “Do and live” but “Live and do.” We don’t think in terms of merit and reward, but of free grace producing holy practice out of hearts overflowing with joy and thanksgiving.

Jesus has blazed a path for us to a new way of life. “Behold, I am making all things new.” The old way of life was, “Keep the commandments and live.” The Law is perfect, holy, just, and good. But, dear saints, you and I have broken the commandments. We can’t say that we’ve kept the ten commandments from our youth like the rich young man (Matthew 19:20; Luke 18:21). On the contrary, our consciences compel us to confess that we have continually broken the law of God. This puts us under sin and condemnation, and there is no hope for us by the works of the law. This is why the gospel opens up another way. ‘By grace you have been saved through faith... not the result of works’ (Ephesians 2:8,9). ‘The one who believes and is baptised will be saved’ (Mark 16:16). ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith’ (Romans 1:17).

We are justified by faith; we’re made acceptable to God by faith. To be “justified” means being made truly righteous. Though we were guilty in ourselves, we are regarded as just by virtue of what Christ has done for us. We fell into condemnation through the first Adam, and we rise into justification through the second Adam, Jesus. It’s written in Isaiah [53:11], “‘The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.’” This scripture is fulfilled in all those who believe in the Lord Jesus to eternal life. Our path to eternal glory is the road of faith, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.” We’re accepted by God when we believe in Jesus whom God sent to be our righteousness: “For ‘no human being will be justified in his sight’ by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20), but we ‘are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith’ (Romans 3:24,25).

By grace, God draws every believer into a new relationship with Him. Rejoice in this fact, saints: ‘you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God [Christ]’ (Galatians 4:7).

“Behold, I am making all things new,” says Jesus, and then he makes us children of our dear Abba, Father. He drowns the old Adam in us in the waters of baptism and raises us to new life with Jesus and the gift of faith; a new creation, beheld and beloved by God. We’re no longer slaves working for servant wages because our Father says to us, “You are mine, you are precious in my sight, I love you and all that I have is yours.” We have his all-sufficient self [2 Corinthians 12:9] for our everlasting lives.

God will never kick us out of his house. Father God has never disowned one of his children. His loving heart is bound up in those he has adopted. That dear and intimate relationship which is manifested in adoption and regeneration, binds you, the children of God, to our great Father's heart in such a way that he will never cast you off, nor suffer you to perish. I rejoice in the fact that we're being made new – transformed by Christ's love into the newly minted family of God, the Most High. "Behold," says Christ, "I am making all things new." Saints, our future is not only assured; it's glorious. Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, who is making all things new. Amen.