

Scripture: Revelation 21:1-7

Message: So Much Hope

August 26, 2018; Bethel CRC, Brockville, ON

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We live in a world where there is so much pain.  
But in all of our troubles, it brings forth little gain.  
We suffer the brokenness of homes and of kin.  
It's easy to say it's all because of sin.  
The nature which sings songs of praise to the Lord,  
then turns and, with fury, its winds will have roared  
and every building and tree in its path  
is whipped and destroyed by the storm's raging wrath.  
Why must people die in fires that are wild?  
Why do some parents inflict pain on a child?  
Why are there stabbings on the street late at night?  
Why must we wait till all things are made right?

John, the apostle, was in exile, alone.  
On Patmos he lived; that island was his home.  
Domitian, the emperor, said "I'm Lord and God;  
I must be honoured, both near and abroad."  
But Christians chose not to give Domitian such praise  
and he persecuted them; for their rebellion they'd pay.  
In spite of the pain and the suffering they faced,  
the Christians stood strong, their faith could not be erased.

Then God gave a vision to put things in perspective.  
It explained everything; there was nothing selective.

It's a vision of hope, of a new heaven and earth,  
with God dwelling with us; it's a reason for mirth.  
In spite of the pain and the suffering we face,  
it's God who controls all time and all space.  
Although there are questions and no answers are found,  
God dwells with us; that gives a foundation that's sound.

In this vision the sea is no more we are told.  
There's two ways to see how this picture unfolds.  
In the Old Testament temple a large basin did stand  
near the altar; it was used for washing one's hands.  
It reminded the people of the need to be clean

when coming to God, by him to be seen.  
But in this vision of a creation made new  
there's no need for cleansing for me or for you.  
In Christ we are clean, forgiven and pure.  
We can stand in God's presence, of that we are sure.

But the sea also meant chaos to the people of old;  
it was a place of uncertainty and monsters quite bold.  
The sea symbolized forces that could lash out and smash,  
and people were helpless when caught in their path.  
That's why a new creation will not have any sea;  
because sin is defeated and in heaven will not be.  
In God's new creation there's nothing that's wrong.  
That's why it inspires us to sing a new song.

The glory that's presented to us in this scene  
shows a bride dressed for marriage, all white and all clean.  
That bride is the church, from all nations she's gathered;  
that's a detail to note, for to God it really mattered.  
"I will be God, and they will all be my people;  
my dwelling is with them, and it's more than a steeple."  
God's dwelling is with us, it's his presence quite real.  
It's something we know, not just something we feel.

God's presence gives comfort; he wipes away every tear.  
He promises victory so there's nothing to fear.  
No more death or mourning or crying or pain,  
for the old order of things has all passed away.  
That is the promise of the one on the throne,  
"I am making things new, you will not be alone.  
You can trust me to do all the things that I say  
Because the words that I speak will not pass away.  
I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End  
From the heart of my being this message I send."

Remember how Adam and Eve with God walked;  
together in Eden they walked and they talked.  
Till they ate of the tree they were told not to taste;  
then out of the garden they were sent with much haste.  
God talked from a distance, or only with a few.  
No one dared approach God; that's one thing they knew.

But God wants to dwell with his people in love,  
so he sent to us Jesus, his Son, from above.  
From the cross and the grave Jesus defeated the powers  
of sin and of death and his victory is ours.

“I will make all things new!” God declares with a shout,  
“That’s what I am doing, that’s what I’m about!”  
The brokenness, hurt, the division and pain  
is all overcome under God’s holy reign.

But I still don’t quite see it, you say with a cry.  
I still don’t have answers when I must ask “why?”  
There’s the grave of a friend where I mourned this past week,  
And I don’t get much blessing when I turn the other cheek.

Why is there hatred and murder and death?  
You say “God’s in control,” but I don’t see it yet.  
There’s all kinds of churches who keep to their place  
and religiously worship in their own special space.  
We have Baptists, United, Pentecostal, Reformed,  
Presbyterian, Anglican, Salvation Army and more.  
If God is one God and his people one people  
then why do we worship under our own special steeple?

The vision of John shows us what one day will be;  
it’s certainly something we all want to see.  
But we know it won’t happen until Christ comes again;  
what glorious perfection all things will be then.

Until that day comes we can’t just sit around  
and do nothing but wait for that trumpet to sound.  
We all must be busy to tell this good news;  
this task we’ve been given we cannot refuse.  
You see, this new creation that’s coming one day  
has already arrived in a quite special way.  
To all who believe in Jesus, God’s Son,  
God says a new creation is what you’ve become.  
The old order of things has all passed away  
in the lives of those who accept Jesus today.

“I am making things new,” says the one on the throne.  
It’s here in the present, already begun.

You see it in people who show that they care,  
who welcome refugees to make their home here.  
You see it in those who listen and give;  
you see it in kindness in how people live.  
“I am making things new,” says the one on the throne.  
It’s here in the present, already begun.

Since you are made new then let it be known  
in your work, at your school and in your own home.  
Live the new life of joy and of hope that God gives  
and show that you trust God in the way that you live.  
You can wipe away tears and ease those in pain  
by letting them know that the Lord God is King.  
When people can see this in your words and your deeds  
it will speak so much louder than all of our creeds.

We hear of God’s promise, so much hope that God gives;  
to all those who trust him in glory they’ll live.  
Our questions and doubts will no longer be,  
for the answer to all in God we will see.  
But that’s not just something we wait for and hope.  
It does not mean that we now longingly cope.  
We live in the confidence of God’s certain power  
that he exercises now, every day, every hour.  
Live in the victory that we have in the Lord.  
Claim every promise that you read in God’s Word.  
Experience a taste of the blessings of heaven,  
because to God’s people they’ve already been given.

Well, now you have heard it, it’s the Word of the Lord.  
What shall we do, ignore it and be bored?  
Or move into action, with hope and with strength;  
because God’s on our side, we can go any length.  
Yes, God dwells with us, on earth with his Church;  
He lives in our hearts, there’s no need to search.  
In heaven someday we’ll enjoy this perfection;  
To spread this good news, let God’s people take action.  
We have so much hope, for the future, for today.  
Thanks be to God, what more can we say!?

Amen.