

April 28, 2013
Easter 5

"No More Sad Tears in Heaven"

REVELATION 21:1-6

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." ⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ He said to me: "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.

The little girl on the front cover of the bulletin could be your child or grand daughter during one of her sad moments. When she takes her hands from her eyes and you see her tears you are moved to hold her and comfort her. Fast forward to your daughter on her wedding tear. Tears of joy well up in her eyes as she walks down the aisle with her dad at her side.

You will not pass through this life without shedding some tears. Some will be tears of joy and others will be tears of sadness. Tears came to my eyes when I saw our first child come into this world and proclaim his presence with his first cry. Tears of sadness came to my eyes when I prayed the Lord's Prayer the last time with my father before he went home to heaven.

Someday in heaven there will be tears of joy but no tears of sadness. John heard a loud voice from heaven tell him and us, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Jesus prepares a place for us

Jesus told us the night before he died that he was going to prepare a place for us. In the Revelation John is privileged to see the new heaven and new earth Jesus is preparing for us. "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea." The present heavens and earth in which we live will be destroyed by fire. From that destruction our Lord will create a new heaven and new earth. God created the present heaven and earth by the power of his Word in a moment of time. God will create a new heaven and new earth in a moment of time, a snap of a finger, a twinkling of an eye. The new heaven and new earth will be a home of righteousness. We will live in perfection as Adam and Eve first did in the Garden of Eden.

This blessing of a new heaven and new earth has a profound effect upon our every day existence. You can put up with the old jalopy you are driving if you know that at the end of the month your rich uncle is going to give you his new Toyota Camry that only has 20 K miles on it. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Our light and momentary affliction troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes, not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

The plans for this new heaven and new earth are all in place. 1 Corinthians 15 says of the current body that you now have, "But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body." Plant a seed in the ground and it will bring forth a plant as God has determined. Place the body of a believer in Christ into the earth and it will be raised to life with a glorious body as the Lord has determined. In his careful planning our Lord Jesus already knows how he will bring you tears of joy in the beautiful places he has prepared for you.

John sees the Holy Christian coming down out of heaven to enjoy the blessings of this new heaven and new earth. "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." When you become a believer in Christ you enter in the New Jerusalem, the Holy city. Listen dear Christian to these words from Hebrews 12 where it says, "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven." It does not say, "We will come to the heavenly Jerusalem." It says we have come.

The Christian church is like a beautiful bride dressed up for her husband on her wedding day. Jesus dresses you in his robes of righteousness. He washes you clean of all your sin and wraps you with his righteousness. Last week we heard John ask the question, "Who are these with white robes and palm branches in their hands?" Do you remember the answer he was given? "These are they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The perfect place that Jesus has prepared for us requires that it be filled with perfect people. Such perfection can never be found in us. It can only be given to us by Christ as free gift.

The aging actress Sophia Loren once said in an interview. "I am not a practicing Christian, but I pray. I read the Bible. It is the most beautiful book ever written. I should go to heaven, otherwise it is not nice. I have not done anything wrong. My conscious is clear. My soul is as white as those orchids over there; and I should go straight, straight to heaven." Like so many people she believes she can produce a righteousness of her own that is worthy of going to heaven. Romans 3 says bluntly and succinctly, "There is none that does good, no not one." It is only by God's grace that you are born again and believe in a righteous outside yourself given to you by Christ.

John hears a loud voice from God's throne describing the beauty of that place Jesus has prepared for us. "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed

away." The Greek word for dwelling could also be translated as tent. When God's people were traveling to the Promised Land the Lord was visible with his glory in the tabernacle or tent. In heaven we will be close to God and God will be close to us. We will see the Lord face to face in all of his glory. Jesus prayed "And now Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." Then he prays for his disciples: "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."

Think of how important it is to know that you are loved. The little girl in the picture needs her mommy or daddy, or nana or papa, to just pick her up and give her a hug. All of the best moments of being loved distilled down into one minute of sheer joy cannot be compared to the joy in the new heaven and new earth when we will be close to God in all of his glory. As John says in his epistle, "We will see him as he is." The 23rd Psalm says tells us that "We will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." To be in the Lord's house means will experience God's perfect love at its highest level and also experience perfect love from other people.

There is a story about a boy who lived in a mansion on a large estate. He was not happy even though his parents could afford to buy him anything he wanted. At night he would sneak out of the mansion and go down the hill to the caretaker's small cottage near the entrance to the great estate. He hid himself under the bushes near the open window where he listened to laughter, and joy and love and joking that was going on in the loving family he did not have. In God's house, God's dwelling place, we will experience a joy even greater than Adam and Eve enjoyed before the fell into sin.

In the place Jesus has prepared for us "There will be no tears." There will be no death and mourning. I recall a lady who lost her husband at the age of 56. He was sitting in the chair while she prepared the evening meal. He suddenly died of a heart attack. She went a whole year without crying. Everyone said how brave she was and how well she was doing. Then on the one year anniversary of his death the floodgates opened up and she cried almost every day. There will be no more pain. There will be no pills in your medicine chest. "The old order of things has passed away." What is heaven like? In heaven there will be no sad tears only tears of joy.

Jesus prepares you for this place

If a new heaven and new earth is so beautiful, how can you be sure that you will be there? Asked that question some will say, "Well, I hope to make it." Some will even look at the life they have lived as the hope of being there because they tried their best to follow the "Golden Rule." What comfort we find in the loud words spoken to John from the throne of God himself. "He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He does not say, "It is up to you to make yourself new so you can come to this new place I have prepared for you."

I cannot make myself new because of the corruption of my sinful heart that shows itself in sinful thoughts and actions on a daily place. Think for example how hard it is to not be selfish and self-centered. Jeremiah 17:6 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things who

can understand it." I simply do not have the ability to take something that is corrupted by sin and make it new. You and I need Jesus to do that for us. 2 Corinthians says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come!" Then it goes on to say, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ." The words of Jesus are trustworthy and true. He tells us, "I am the vine, you are the branches." Then he says "You are clean through the Word of I spoken to you."

"He said to me: "It is done! I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of spring of the water of life." "It is done." Jesus said from the cross, "It is finished." He invites us to drink freely from life giving waters of forgiveness and peace with God that only he can give. It cost Jesus everything to provide forgiveness for us, but it cost us nothing. I close this sermon with a word that you can recall this week as you go through your daily tasks of life. The word is lachrymose which means easily brought to tears. When we see each other in heaven for the first time, I know that we will have tears, lots of tears, not tears of sorrow but tears of joy. Even so Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.