

WELCOME 26th May 2019 – 6 Easter '19 C

Revelation 11:15-19 & 14:13

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! Special welcome to our visitors & guests...It is wonderful that you are all here! It's our privilege & joy to serve you in worship...

To be a human is to suffer from chronic near-sightedness. We can't see tomorrow. It is rare if we can truly see today clearly. And our memories play tricks with the past...we remember what we want to remember...or we just forget...so even the past is foggy.

Does that mean life is just random chaos, one thing disconnected from any other, filled with uncertainty or insecurity? Or is there some sure anchor for our lives & our souls?

*"We give thanks to you, Lord God, the Almighty, the one who is and who always was,
for now you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign."*

John shows us the great hope toward which all creation is being drawn: The Father who created all things for his pleasure will one day rule over all things in love. Neither past, present nor future are determined by us or by the circumstances of our lives or the challenges or threats we face. All of life is played out in the hands of Jesus who holds past, present *AND* future in the sure grip of his life won for us by his death & resurrection.

Living in Trust is relying on The One who has been faithful from eternity to eternity – Living in Trust is depending on The One who raised Christ from the dead –

Living in Trust counting on The One who opens the grave so all who believe can walk from death into life unending to be faithful today...right now.

We'll explore & experience that today...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, open to us the sea of your mercy & water us with full streams of your grace. Make us children of quietness, & heirs of peace. Light the fire of your love in our hearts & strengthen our weakness by your power. Help us to see and hear and know your living presence in us today...Through Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

6 EASTER '19 C – MAKING ALL THINGS NEW: LIVING IN TRUST

FAITH CHAT:

1. Are there people you have a hard time trusting? Why?
2. What prevents you from fully trusting God at various points in your life?

When Charis was a little girl & my job description at the church we served in Nth Tx included youth/mission ministries, I spent large chunks of time away at camps & on mission trips...maybe 3-4 weeks every Summer AND there were all the “churchy” business gatherings & PD events I attended. So for parts of her early life I was away maybe 2 months of the year on “business.” Now I know folks who travel to work & my away time is a drop in their bucket...but for us it seemed a lot.

But before I'd go away, I used to write little notes to her & leave them with Leonie who would put them around the house each day I was gone where Charis would find them & get a “message from dad.” The messages were simple. I loved her. I missed her. I hoped she had a great day. I was doing what I was doing. I'd be back in X-sleeps. She should be mommy's big helper while I was gone.

Now...why'd I do that? Not rocket science...I was gone but I was still invested in her life I loved her. I viewed my absence as an intrusion into my life as a husband/father. I really enjoyed what I did as a pastor in those away times, but I have always viewed myself as follower of Jesus, husband/father, pastor...When I get those confused we all suffer...So 1st it was self-correcting...keep my head in the game. But just as important, I didn't want her to feel forgotten. I wanted her to know the reality of my love for her. When I go away now I text & ring & check in so that everyone is reminded of their place in my heart. BUT there was more. I also wanted her to remember she had a role in our family too. She *COULD BE* “mommy's big helper.” While I was gone she could assume some responsibility...It's always been an essential part of our family that every one of us has jobs to do to keep things going smoothly...especially if one of us is out of the picture for a while. Leonie's in SA auntie's 90th

BIBLES...I shouldn't have to connect the dots for you...Every word of the gospels, every letter Paul wrote, every letter Peter/John wrote, every word in Hebrews & especially in the Revelation that John received & shares is in many ways the same. Jesus is not physically on site at the moment. We don't know how many sleeps until he comes back. But in the meantime: We are not forgotten, not abandoned, not on our own. We are still precious/treasured/loved/bought & paid for w/ the blood of Christ. He's still invested in us working in us AND we have a role to play in seeing his will & work come to fruition as he works in & through us. While we wait however many sleeps until he returns we do not have the luxury of sitting on our thumbs or just holding hands singing KumBaYah. That sort of idleness & laxity is not our call.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, & there were loud voices shouting in heaven: “The world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord & of his Christ, & he will reign forever & ever.” The twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones before God fell with their faces to the ground & worshiped him. And they said, “We give thanks to you, Lord God, the Almighty, the one who is & who always was, for now you have assumed your great power & have begun to reign...” 5 times in the Revelation John is ushered to the very throne room of God's Reign. (this is 3rd...at the very centre of what John is given to write) 5 times John shows us the great hope toward which all creation is being drawn: The Father who created all things for his pleasure will one day rule over all things in love. John sees that while the struggle of faith & to be faithful continues on this earth; from God's perspective...the triumph is already ours.

Up in the heavenly throne room no one is worried; on the contrary, they are praising God. From the Father's vantage point, the war is already over, already won. God already reigns. The nations have been judged. God's prophets & saints have been gathered & embraced in love peace & jubilant joy. The victory that is still in the future for God's people on earth is a present reality in heaven.

Let's remember to whom John is originally writing: What have we said? They were outnumbered/outside in the Empire. Persecuted, marginalized, & treated badly in 100s of different ways. Some of their friends/family had been killed for their trust in Jesus. Many lost property/jobs & were shunned in the culture in which they lived. The transformation in their lives was obvious/striking They were different & everyone knew it.

But what did that mean? What were the choices they faced as a result? In a world turned against them...remember – *THEY'RE US* – what were the choices & challenges of living in trust...in a world that always looked at you as if you were nuts because you didn't share the prevailing worldview? Would not buy in to the cultural swamp?

Let's put the 1st one like this...They had to know that trusting Jesus was for the long haul not the quick fix. We don't know how many sleeps until Jesus returns. We don't know what each day will bring what will happen when the other shoe falls when the Dr is on the other end of the phone when the phone brrrrps at midnight...

We said last week; I don't think we can say it enough...faith in Jesus does not insulate you from the firestorm that could hit your life. There is no bubble wrap issued in baptism. I was talking to a pastor friend & I couldn't remember if they had any grandkids...their answer yes/no. Daughter had a baby not custody. They're trusting Jesus for the long haul because there's no easy 3 steps 4 keys 8 principles to fixing what's broke in those relationships/lives. Anybody trying to sell you Jesus-the-great-repairman...fixer-upper...your best life now - is lying. LongHaul not QuickFix

In the 1st century, there was no other community like the early church. They lived by Paul's witness that in Christ *There is no longer Jew/Gentile, slave/free, male/female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And now that you belong to Christ, you are true children of Abraham & heirs of God's promise...* They lived racially economically socially at the foot of the cross...that was tough & they didn't always get it right & it was always an effort to maintain their Unique Lifestyle vs Fitting in/Accommodating to the world around them. Peter got it... *1 Pt 1:14 - Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires.--1 Pt 4:4 - Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild/destructive things they do. So they slander you. But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both living & dead. To be that city on a hill that community known for generosity, hospitality, compassion, urgent witness & bold open faith...is foolishly costly from the world's point of view, but it is faithful from the cross & it is our way in Christ in this world.*

But that is so easy to say & so hard in so many ways when so much of this world would call you to live so much less under the lie of "you can have it all." So Jesus takes John & us to the throne of the Father (5 times) to call us to Lift up your heads not duck & cover. To see our lives from the victory that is already ours.

As Lk recounts the life of Jesus, Lk 21 Jesus warns his disciples the day is coming when everything they hold dear & precious will be under threat. When their lives in this world will be confused by circumstances/situations they don't understand & they'll be hounded by the authorities *everyone will hate you because you are my followers. But not a hair of your head will perish! By standing firm you will win your souls & they'll sense his return is near... "So when all these things begin to happen, stand up look up, (lift up your heads) for your salvation is near!"* – Lk 21:28

On the night of his betrayal Jesus told the 12, *"Here on earth you will have many trials & sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* – Jn 16:33 In his 1st letter, John, wrote to encourage struggling Christians, *"You belong to God, my dear children. You have already won your fight...because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world."* -1 Jn 4:4 The trust to which God calls us is unbreakably bound to God's eternal desire to redeem/recreate all Creation by Christ's death/rez not to our life circumstances – the daily/fluctuating occurrences of this life.

We don't know who wrote the book of Hebrews...but here's this: *Therefore, we who have fled to God for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong & trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us."* – Heb 6:18-20

If all I think about is what I'm feeling what I'm experiencing what I want right now "What do I want right now? How do I feel right now? What is happening right now?" It distorts my vision, blurs my future, affects my judgement, & makes every step uncertain fearful anxious.

But if we live through the lens of Christ's death/rez – his victory & his gift to us of life with him forever in the Father's presence...Jesus' resurrection gives us present clarity, future certainty, wise decision-making & trust/hope in each step. Whatever is happening now, will never thwart God's purposes or promise to those who belong to him.

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Let's pray with that in mind...**Lord Jesus deepen my trust, strengthen my reliance, fortify my obedience & anchor me completely in you. Make my every word & deed an expression of your life & love. Amen**