

Journey's End

Matters of Faith: Part 2 "Journey's End"

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – November 1st, 2020

All Saints Day

Readings: Revelation 7:9-17; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12

Reflection: Psalm 34:1-10, 22

Greeting: Trust in the Lord and do good. May the Lord give strength to the people! O taste and see that the Lord is good! God is our refuge and strength. Praise the Lord!

Prayer: O Lord our God, you are always more ready to bestow your good gifts on us than we are to seek them, and are willing to give more than we desire or deserve. Help us so to seek that we may truly find, so to ask that we may joyfully receive, so to knock that the door of your mercy may be opened to us; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 34:1-10, 22

I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed. This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord, and was saved from every trouble. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him. O fear the Lord, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want. The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

(Psalm 34:1-10, 22 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 34 and hear of God's grace and glory. That when we reach out for the Lord, he will care for us. That we will always find refuge in God's love. What does that hope in God mean to you? What comfort do you take that you are redeemed instead of condemned? How do you call upon God to deliver you? Do you call on the Lord to help others? In what ways can we share in the joy that God gives us?

Prayer: God, our faithful guardian. We seek your hand to protect us. When we are in trouble, you are the hope that sustains us. Grant us your grace that we may find the strength to do your will. Help us to always be thankful for the many blessings that you have given us. Grant us the faith we need to continue to follow you. May your steadfast love and generous mercy be with us always and everywhere. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Revelation chapter 7, verses 9 through 17.

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

(Revelation 7:9-17 NRSV)*

Our next reading is from First John chapter 3, verses 1 through 3.

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

(1 John 3:1-3 NRSV)*

Our final reading is from Matthew, chapter 5, verses 1 through 12.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(Matthew 5:1-12 NRSV)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

We continue our series about Matters of Faith. This week we look at Journey's End. And this can be a difficult one to talk about, because it's hard for us to fully comprehend what comes after this life. And this a thing that can make us anxious because it is an unknown. And the unknown is always something that will cause us to stir, to question. But I think it's important that when we look at the end of this journey that we also see it as the beginning of the next. That it is the end of one stage and not the end of everything. And I think it's important because without that hope it can become very difficult to think about. But it is a matter of faith, because that is what we have to go on: a promise. A promise that we put our faith in.

We get this look of what happens after this life in our readings for today. In our reading from Revelation. We have a multitude of people that no one can count. Praising and worshiping God. And the question arises, who are these people robed in white? Who are the people of this vision? They're the ones who have come out of the great ordeal. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And we get this image. "They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." It's a very moving statement. You might note that I spoke of this as a vision, and I say that because sometimes we can get a little wrapped up in Revelation. In thinking that it's all very literal, and that it's going to paint an exact picture of things. But I have to tell you that I don't see it that way, mainly because of the way that it's presented is that it is a vision. That it is meant to be interpreted. And that doesn't take away from it. Honestly, I think that adds to it. Because, to me, it's trying to describe something otherwise indescribable. Something beyond us. Something that requires a great faith to understand. But what I do get is comfort. And that comfort is important because it doesn't say that these are people who are finished and there's no more. It is that God is there for them. No more suffering, no more pain, and no more worry. They are cared for. They have trusted in a promise and the promise has been fulfilled. That they have found life after life, so to speak.

And we see this promise in First John. And we also get something that I think is very true. If we are God's children now, what we will be has not yet been revealed. I think that's also important to remember. That there are things we know and things we don't. And that's what makes this so hard. However, it goes on "What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him," like Christ, "for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure." In our Gospel reading for today we get the Beatitudes, which we hear quite often. About the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, all blessed. In the end, it has "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." The interesting thing to me is that we have a reflection of some of those Beatitudes in Revelation. Those who hunger will hunger no more. Those who thirst will thirst no more. That all those things that we suffer will be wiped away.

You know, it's hard. It's hard when we talk about death because of all the things we don't know. And so, we focus on what we do. That there is something more. But also, that this life isn't just a waiting game. It isn't just patiently saying "well, something more is around the corner, I'm just going to wait for it." That if we are to be called children of God that we live like it, so that we can live again. That we recognize the struggles that we have in this life, not as something that we simply endure and wait. But if we can say all those people are blessed and do work to make God's kingdom here on Earth, we do our part. We are not an inactive people with an inactive face. We are a people with a strong faith that drives us to live this life the best we can, with our hope in the next. Hope not just for us but hope for those that have ended their journey already. And one of the things that I find in all this is comfort. A comfort that I take in faith that means I don't have to worry. Because I place myself in God's hands. That I do what I can in this life, and my hope for the next is with God. And because of that I don't fret. I don't obsess over it. And it might seem odd. That often we feel like if this is the end of the journey we should be prepared, we should know what's coming. We should have everything ready. To that I ask why? Is it so important? To me, it's not. I'm not saying that the life to come isn't important, for it is terribly important. Not to say I don't believe in it, I fully have faith that, as God's children, God will take care of us. But I like to think of it as a child.

My young kids don't have great concerns over what being an adult is going to be like right now. I doubt they could fully fathom it. And as a father, not wanting them to live out their childhood stressed and wondering what it's going to be like to the point that they never have a childhood. I encourage them to live full and blessed lives as children, knowing that when they get there, they'll be okay. And that's sort of how I think about what it will be like when this blessed journey ends. I have faith that even though I don't know what it's going to be like I have hope. Hope that if I live in Christ, then I die in Christ, and I'm raised in Christ. And what he calls me to do I do, trusting that that is what will get me there in the end. And one might say that that's a simple way to look at things. And I would say yes, it is. Because sometimes simple is better. Because I could ask myself, how are the streets paved? Are there streets? What is it

like? What will houses be like? What will life be like? But I remember, I'm a little child trying to understand what it is to be all grown up, and accept the simple truth that I don't know. And that that's okay, because maybe that's the message that we all need to hear sometimes. That it's okay not to know and to trust that it'll be okay. Because I have faith that Christ our Redeemer, our Savior did come to this life to give us hope, so that we would know love in this life, so that we would trust in the next. That we would know joy in this life to be prepared for the joy in the next.

That's what I think of when I think about all those who have ended their journey of this mortal life. I trust that they are in the hands of a loving and merciful God because I put my life in God's hands. And I trust that if he helps me to live this life, surely, he'll help me to the next. And so, I don't worry. I don't fret. I don't try to piece together what it's going to be. Aside from knowing that it's going to be good. Don't try to figure out what I'll be like, other than I will be like Christ. And I put my trust in him. That in his blood I will make myself pure because we are of his body. That we are one people, God's children. That it isn't God's will that we spend our entire life worrying, fretting, and scared. But that we understand we are blessed in this life with the hope of life to come and that we are blessed that Christ is with us now, today in our lives. And that if Christ is with us now and Christ will be with us then, it will be okay. Then and now. I have faith. Faith that if Christ will help me to see just this day through, that Christ will help me to see every day through, from journeys beginning to journeys and to new beginnings.

So, carry with you the memories of those who have gone before. Carry with you the joy that they brought to your lives. Carry with you the hope that God gives us that they're in God's hands. Just as we are. That if we trust in that we have nothing to worry about and nothing to fear. That when we remember we let it be a joy. And we have faith. Faith that everything will be okay. Because Christ is with us, yesterday, today, and every tomorrow hereafter. Let that faith carry you through always and everywhere. That we may have faith in the grace of our Father, we rejoice in the mercy of the Son, and that we are lifted by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: We confess to you, all-knowing God, what we are. We are not the people we like others to think we are. We are afraid to admit, even to ourselves, what lies in the depths of our souls. But we cannot hide our true selves from you. You know us as we are, and yet you love us. Help us not to shrink from self-knowledge. Teach us to respect ourselves for your sake. Give us the courage to put our trust in your guiding power. Raise us out of the paralysis of guilt into the freedom and energy of forgiven people. And for those who through long habit find forgiveness hard to accept, we ask you to break their bondage and set them free; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

A Reading & Remembrance Naming for All Saints Day

Ken Bushur	Bryce Carlen	Charlotte Carrell	Jim Croy	Dan Eubank
Jerry Green	Jo Hawes	Jerry Jackson	Tom Jester	Leroy Miller
Shane Santrock	John Veach	Lyle Whitley		

All other who finished their journey in the last year

All those whom we still hold dear in our hearts

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: We go forth now in faith and peace. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Until we meet again. **Amen.**

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Eric Veach	Cathy Devall
Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Nancy Sowers	Cindy Cisney
Patti Corder & Crew	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins
Ronnie & Elaine Carlen	Don Stewart	Anne Winkler Heinrichs	Bill Gilbert
Michael & Makenzie Reynolds		Ronnie Winstead	John Millsap
Family of Jim Croy	Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons	Richard Durham
Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd
Lois Woolever	Mary White	Nick Nichols	Leo Smith
Family of Dan Eubank	Family of Charlotte Carrell	Bonnie Hite	Greg Williams
Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte
Kim Hennes			

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Our Current Series – Matters of Faith

This series looks at different aspects of our faith journey and how we live out our faith in Christ.

October 25th – *Born Again* – What it means to live a new life in Christ.

November 1st – *Journey's End* – A reflection on life to come.

November 8th – *Salvation* – A discussion of how we are saved.

November 15th – *Work and Faith* – The relationship between faith and works.

November 22nd – *Giving Thanks* – Why giving thanks is a faith matter.