

Jesus is the Beginning and End

Jesus Is: Part 3 “Jesus is the Beginning and End”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – January 31st, 2021

4th Sunday After Epiphany

Readings: Revelation 1:4-8; John 1:1-5

Reflection: Psalm 111

Greeting: For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Prayer: O Lord God, your chosen dwelling is the heart of the lowly. We give you thanks that you revealed yourself in the holy child Jesus, thereby sanctifying all childhood in him. Make us humble in faith and love, that we may know the joy of the gospel hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. This we ask in the name of the One, who, wearing our mortal flesh, grew in wisdom and in favor with God and all people, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 111

Praise the Lord! I thank the Lord with all my heart in the company of those who do right, in the congregation. The works of the Lord are magnificent; they are treasured by all who desire them. God's deeds are majestic and glorious. God's righteousness stands forever. God is famous for his wondrous works. The Lord is full of mercy and compassion. God gives food to those who honor him. God remembers his covenant forever. God proclaimed his powerful deeds to his people and gave them what had belonged to other nations. God's handiwork is honesty and justice; all God's rules are trustworthy— they are established always and forever: they are fulfilled with truth and right doing. God sent redemption for his people; God commanded that his covenant last forever. Holy and awesome is God's name! Fear of the Lord is where wisdom begins; sure knowledge is for all who keep God's laws. God's praise lasts forever!
(Psalm 111 CEB+)

We read the words of Psalm 111 and hear of God's continued work. God's righteousness will always last. We hear a call to praise and honor God for all that he has done and continues to do. What are some of the ways that you see God's works in your own life? How do you honor God? What can you do to share your love of God with others? Do we remember God as the beginning and end of all things? How can we share the love that God has shown us with others? What can we do to share all that God has done for us?

Prayer: Oh Lord, help us as we remember all that has been done for us. Let us recall all the ways that you help us and are there for us. Especially in this time, help us to recognize all the ways that your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, is in our lives. Help us to see all the ways that he is with us. Help us to remember Christ as the beginning and end of all things. 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 Common English Bible. Our first reading is from Revelation chapter 1, verses 4 through 8.

John, to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace and peace to you from the one who is and was and is coming, and from the seven spirits that are before God's throne, and from Jesus Christ—the faithful witness, the firstborn from among the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To the one who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, who made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—to him be glory and power forever and always. Amen. Look, he is coming with the clouds! Every eye will see him, including those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him. This is so. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the one who is and was and is coming, the Almighty."

(Revelation 1:4-8 CEB+)

Our next reading is from John chapter 1, verses 1 through 5.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning. Everything came into being through the Word, and without the Word nothing came into being. What came into being through the Word was life, and the life was the light for all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

(John 1:1-5 CEB+)

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

This week as we continue our Jesus Is series, we come to Jesus is the Beginning and End. And I think this one's a little trickier sometimes to fully comprehend what that actually means for us because we often get so caught up in everything surrounding this idea that we can lose track of what it actually means for us. And the two readings that I picked for today highlight this sort of beginning and end idea. John opens with the idea of the beginning. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning." This harkens back to the very opening of Genesis, when all was created. And in John we see this idea of the beginning, that all came into life in Christ, that all life came to being through Christ. Then we have Revelation, and this is mentioned a few times in it. Here we have the opening part of Revelation and the way that it lays out the role of Christ. The faithful witness. The first born from among the dead. The ruler of the kings of the earth.

The one who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood. That he is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the one who is, and was, and is coming.

One might ask what does all of that really mean in our day to day lives? If Christ is the beginning and the end, it seems that that has to do with creation and the second coming. Where does that leave us and all the time in between? To explain that, I want to look at what it really means if we accept Christ as the beginning and the end of all the things that we go through. That when we look at our lives, if we shrink this idea down, and we stop thinking about it in such concrete things as creation and the second coming, and we think about it in everything that we do. And we look at Christ as the beginning and the end. It helps to guide us in what actions we take in our lives. That if we begin something new, and we let Christ be the beginning, that we start whatever we're going to do with Christ in mind, that Christ will help us to start on the right foot. That Christ will help us to make sure that we are doing the right thing. And when we look at the end result of what we're wanting to do that it ends in service, and love, and friendship with Christ. If our end goal does not line up with what we would want Christ to see, then our end goal must not be right.

For me this opened up a very interesting way of thinking about all things. Because so often the idea of the beginning and the end leaves us without thinking about what that means to us. So, when I was looking at this, I started thinking about how we start things in Christ. If I wanted to go and help someone, I first want to be in prayer and ask Christ what action it is I need to take. And then I would let Christ guide me in those actions, thinking about the end result. That I want to be producing good fruit for Christ. That if we look at our actions and we don't see anything that we think Christ would be wanting us to do, then we know that, in the end, we're not inviting Christ to be there. That, in some ways, with every action we take, we are inviting Christ to begin it for us and to end it for us. Because we leave all things in his hands. Because he is the one that guides us and leads us and helps us. The one that cares for us. The one that loves us. The one that is willing to help us to do all that it is we need to do. So, if we look at all that we are and all that we do in that light, it helps us to always make sure that we are going to be people producing good fruit, people who are ministers of the good news in all that we do. Because in all that we do, we let it begin and end in Christ.

In some ways, this gives us a rough blueprint as to how to lay out our actions. Are we always going to be able to live up to that blueprint? No. That will always be a struggle. Because there will always be things that we end up doing without thinking them through. There will always be things that go wrong, and we often aren't willing to admit they've gone wrong until we see the end and we see something that we don't recognize. And in that we turn to Christ to help us to make it right. Sometimes it is finding a way to let things end so that we may let Christ make a new beginning. But it also helps us with all of our interactions with each other. Because if we start with Christ as the beginning, knowing that all goodness comes through him, then we begin on the right foot. We start by knowing that whatever it is we're setting out to do we are setting out to do it in love and compassion and charity. We are setting out to do it with the idea

in mind that whatever it is we're wanting to start that we want it to be something that we start in Christ. That we started with that foundation, not on the shifting sands of our own logic or our own worries or our own desires, but we build it upon the solid rock that will prop us up no matter what. We let Christ be the foundation for whatever it is we do in our lives. And then we let Christ guide us in all that we do and all that we say and in all that we endeavor to be. We let Christ be the one that walks us through that helps to show us the way. He wards us off from the past that will lead us to nothing good but will walk us from the light to the darkness. And so, we let Christ be the light that brings us back always to where we need to be. That when we look at the end result, we always keep Christ in focus because we want it to be something that furthers his kingdom. That furthers his teaching. That furthers his love. And if we are doing something and we are looking towards the end result and we don't see Christ, then we need to start looking around to find where he will be in the end, so that we may end things with him.

This moves on a grand scale and on a tiny one. It may be the way that you plan out your day with the simple things that you're planning to do over the course of a few hours. Let it begin with Christ and let it end with Christ so that all may be well with you. And all may be done in love. It may be on a grand scale, that you begin something that may last years and years. But to make sure that it lasts as long as it should we begin it in Christ, following what Christ has taught us, doing things in love. Making sure that we do things so that we will not harm others with our actions. That we may do good in bringing people to the light and that everything that we do we do so that we may show the love that we have for the God who watches over us. That we be guided by the Spirit, so that all that we do may be for the kingdom that we are a part of. So that when we look at the end, no matter how far off down the road it is, the end result that we have in mind is something that will benefit the kingdom. Something that will grow the light. Something that will bear more love to be born into this world. Because it's also how we simply live our lives, knowing that we came into existence through God's grace and glory. Knowing that this life will end in Christ, so that we may live again in Christ, so that we may celebrate when he comes in final victory. This idea scales down as small as we need it to be or as big as we need it to be. Be at deciding how we make our decisions on calling a friend to give them comfort in a time of need or how we view all creation beginning and ending. That when you view it all through the lens that Christ is the beginning and the end, it helps us to keep in focus on what it is we're actually wanting to do and not getting lost in the details of the moment, but always focusing on what it is Christ would want us to do.

This again comes back to the last two weeks. That as we have talked about what Jesus is that when we think of Jesus as a friend. That Jesus will always be there for us to confide in. If we're not sure, we can talk to him as our friend to help us figure out what it is we should be doing, if we aren't already doing it. We see it in Jesus as the Good Shepherd, that as we do what we are trying to do we know that he will be there to watch over us, and protect us, and to help us be where we need to be as long as we follow him to get to the end. And so, in this way when we think about Jesus as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first

and the last, we think about it in the way that we live, the way that we think, the way that we speak, the way that we act, so that everything that we do we do so that may produce good fruit, that we may further the kingdom and not hinder it. That we may show love so that others may see the light and come to the light. So, let us begin all that we do with Christ. So that as we begin, we know that Christ is with us and Christ is guiding us, and Christ is leading us. As we continue on the journey, let our every action be guided so that we are working towards an end in Christ that reflects the love that he has shown us. That we do all that we can to reflect the love of the one that freed us from our sins by his blood. Who made us a kingdom. Who gave us the good news that we may share it. That we know that he always has and always is and always will be with us for us. And with that, may we always walk in his light and his love. And always let him be the start and the finish. That Christ may be the Alpha and the Omega. That Christ may be the first and the last of our thoughts. And in all that we are and all that we do we recognize that Jesus is the beginning and the end. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: Almighty and all-loving God, through your Son Jesus Christ you have reconciled the world to yourself. Help us now to be reconciled with one another, that again we might dwell in the warmth of your love. Inspire us with your Holy Spirit to put aside the cloak of pride and put on Christ, that we might forgive and be forgiven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. 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.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. 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	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew
Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen
Don Stewart	Anne Winkler Heinrichs		Michael & Makenzie Reynolds
Ronnie Winstead	John Millsap	Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons
Trinity Powers	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family
Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Mary White	Nick Nichols
Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite	Dr. Scott McMurray	Greg Williams
Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte
Kim Hennes			

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Our Current Series – Jesus Is

Our series is *Jesus Is*, and is about the different ways we view Christ.

January 17th – *Jesus is a Friend* – How do we see our friendship with Jesus?

January 24th – *Jesus is the Good Shepherd* – What does it mean to be a good shepherd?

January 31st – *Jesus is the Beginning and End* – All things begin and end in Christ.

February 7th – *Jesus is Lord* – Is Lord more than just a title?

February 14th – *Jesus is a Prophet* – We see Jesus as many things, prophet included.