



Eternity, Now
Revelation 21:1-6a
Preached FCCW 11-1-2015: All Saints Day

There is something about human beings
that compels us to know where it is we came from.

We have whole sciences dedicated
to understanding our origins.

Anthropology, archaeology and paleontology,
to name a few.

Maybe you have fed that hunger of knowing

more about where you come from
by taking part in the Genealogy workshops
that have been offered here at the church.

There is something about knowing our origins
that we connect with better understanding ourselves.

The first chapters of the first book of the Bible, Genesis;
are made up of what we call stories of origins;
written to help us understand
where we came from, so that we might better
comprehend why we are here.

Genesis describes God's creation of the physical universe
out of nothingness.

It portrays the beginning of something new,
something that never was before.

Whether you interpret these stories as a
literal step by step description of how we got here,
or take them more figuratively,
they have a lot to tell us about who we are.

In the very LAST chapters
of the last book in the Bible,
Revelation;
we find what can be called
stories of destinations,

which tell us something different about ourselves
by telling us where we are going.

The first verse of this morning's passage from Revelation
describes a vision given to a disciple of Jesus named John.

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;
for the first heaven and the first earth
had passed away."

This new creation that John sees
represents where humanity is ultimately headed.

It is a place where God will dwell with mortals
without anything standing in the way.

So where we come from and where we are going;
our origin and our destination,
are the same.

God.

We come from God,
and we are heading home to God.

That is what it means when the voice of God
is heard in this passage saying,

"I am the alpha and the omega,
the beginning and the end."

Because God is eternal,
God is our beginning and our end.

But what about our middle?

Where does God fit in our present?

Or maybe the right question is

where does our "now" fit in God's eternity?

When we speak of eternity or eternal life,

we usually mean something that

starts after we die.

It is where we will be with God forever and ever.

And, the new heaven and new earth in Revelation

is mostly described in the future tense.

"See, the home of God is among mortals.

He WILL dwell with them;

they WILL BE his peoples,

and God himself WILL BE with them;

he WILL WIPE every tear from their eyes.

Death WILL BE no more;

mourning and crying and pain WILL BE no more."

Do you hear all the "WILL BE's" in those verses?

These are all things that haven't happened yet.

Things we are still waiting for.

Because, there is still plenty of mourning,

tears and pain in our world today.

We are still on our way to the destination

described in Revelation.

But listen to this shift in the tense of the next verse.

"And the one who was seated on the throne said,

See, I AM MAKING all things new."

Present tense.

No waiting.

God will make all things New,

but God is in the process of making all things new,

NOW.

The job won't be completed until

some unknown time in the future,

but it has begun and it is going on around us.

In a sense, it is going on within us and through us.

We are in God's eternity, now!

Notice what this passage doesn't say.

It doesn't say that God is making all things BETTER.

It doesn't say that God is making all things PERFECT.

It says that God is making all things NEW.

As in something that has never been experienced before.

The apostle Paul wrote that,

"No eye has seen,

no ear has heard,

no mind has conceived,

what God has prepared for those who love him"

How can we visualize a new creation;

something that has never existed before

when all we have to go on

is what we've always known?

No matter how hard we try,

we can't imagine something

beyond the laws of this present universe in which we live.

All we can do is have faith in its reality.

But, it is that very act of having faith in its reality

that is the first step in it becoming real.

This is the new reality that the prophets of the Old Testament

were describing when they spoke of

lions lying down with lambs,

and swords being beaten into plowshares.

It is the reality Jesus was describing

when he spoke about the last being first,

about messiahs who suffer and die,

about losing your life to find it,

and about becoming poor in the world's eyes

in order to be immeasurably rich in God's kingdom.

What those attitudes and actions have in common

is that are better suited for life in a new creation,

governed by different laws,
than in where we are at presently.

The way Christ calls us to live
contradicts the way the world works
and goes against the grain of our own human nature.

Yet we can't escape the fact that living the way he showed us to
is exactly what Jesus expects us to do.

He even bet his life on it.

There is an odd line in this passage
that offers a clue to this seeming paradox.

Part of the future when the new heaven and new earth
would come into fullness,
when the old heaven and old earth
had passed away,

includes this feature, where it says,

"AND THE SEA WAS NO MORE."

All thorough the Bible "the sea" is used to represent
things like chaos, danger, and evil;
everything, in other words,
that is opposite and opposed to
what God intends the world to be.

All these things ARE BEING MADE NEW
whenever and wherever men and women

who are guided by God's Spirit,
strive to live as if God's new creation
were already here,
instead of living as if what we see around us
is all there is and all there will ever be

In 2nd Corinthians it says,
"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;
the old has gone, the new has come!"

Do you believe that about yourself?
Because God is waiting for people
who believe that they are a new creation
and who will live as if they are a new creation,
because it is through people such as these
that God is making all things new.

That is what makes someone a saint.
It isn't that they are perfect,
but that they are purposefully living already,
as the new creation they are in Christ.

Living a life that is defined not by what is passing away;
but is lived according to a faith that
eternity is already happening, now.

It is at this table that we glimpse a vision
of what was, what is, and what will be.

Where we commune with the saints
who have gone before us,
with Jesus who is always with us,
and take up our role that new creation
that God is bringing to fulfillment through us.