

Between Alpha and Omega

FCCW 11-4-2018 All Saints Day

Revelation 21:1-6a

T. S. Eliot's poem "East Coker" begins with the verse, "In my beginning is my end."

And, it concludes with the words, "In my end is my beginning."

Eliot seems to be pointing us towards an understanding of the ways our origins and our destiny shape the people we are in the in-between times of our lives.

The Bible also has a lot to say about beginnings and endings, and their roles in making us the people we are becoming, day by day .

The very first words of the Bible describe our beginning. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

There it tells us that we are created in God's image, and created for communion with God.

The immediacy of God's presence is portrayed in scenes of God walking through the Garden of Eden and casually conversing with Adam and Eve.

So, our original purpose is to be in a relationship to God and to reflect that relationship in our interactions with each other.

God, we are told, declared all this to be "very good," in other words, it is in accord with God's purpose and intention for us.

The very last chapters of the last book in the Bible, Revelation; tells us something about our ultimate destiny.

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

This new creation is also "very good" for there is no death or unhappiness to be found there.

God won't be hard to find in this new creation either, because He will make His home in the midst of humanity.

Everything that separates us from communion with God, and all the consequences of that separation are promised to be removed.

In the Bible, too, our beginning is in our end, and our end is in our beginning.

All of this is summed up in one sentence that we hear God speak in the reading from Revelation.

“I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end.”

Alpha and Omega, for those who don’t know, are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Like our letters A and Z.

God is our Alpha and our Omega.

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

God is our beginning and God is our end.

But what about all that lies in between our beginning and our end?

Because it’s here, between Alpha and Omega, that we live our lives, isn’t it?

It’s here that we yearn for God’s presence.

And while much of this life can be called “very good,” let’s face it, it is just as clear that between Alpha and Omega all is not in accord with God’s good intention for His creation.

Both scripture passages that were read this morning present a hopeful vision for a time when death, disease, and disgrace will be no more; and intimacy with God will again be the norm, instead of the elusive exception.

The operative term in these visions, though is, will be.

Both visions are stated in the future tense.

The new heaven and new earth in both Isaiah and Revelation, are things that we hope for but as yet do not see.

But something else is happening in this passage.

It says, “And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I AM MAKING all things new.’”

Not, I WILL BE MAKING all things new.

I Am MAKING all things new.

God is in the process of making all things new, NOW.

The job won’t be completed until some unknown Omega time in the future, but it has begun.

It is going on around us if we have eyes to see.

And it is going on within us, if we have the courage to believe it.

All 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 in resignation to the old heaven and earth that is passing away.

In 2nd Corinthians it says, "If anyone is in Christ, that person 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 such people 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 living already, as the new creation they are in Christ.

A life that is not grounded in what is passing away.

Not even a life that is established on hopeful expectancy of a better future.

But a life that is lived according to a faith that eternity is already unfolding, now.

A life that is eager to participate in the new creation that God is bringing into being in the present moment and to be God's instrument in that transformation.

The key to sainthood is the conviction that the God who is so big as to be the Alpha and Omega of all things that ever were or ever will be – is also the God who chooses to make His home in people like you and me.

That is what sainthood is about – this great God who, when alive in us, is too big to be contained in us

and so shows through us, in a world where God's presence isn't always otherwise apparent.

God making all things new in the world begins with God making all things new in us.

Our part is to give God the permission to remove from us the old things about us that get in the way of God showing through our lives, and recreating us more and more in the image of Jesus.

God's plan for making all things new on a cosmic scale begins and ends with making all things new on a very personal level, as individual men and women are transformed into new creations through whom God shows through.

Christian sainthood isn't about achieving moral perfection.

It is all about relationships – relationships with God and with one another.

It is through our relationship with God, that God reveals himself to us.

And it is through relationships with others that saints are used to reveal God to the world.

On this All Saints' Day, we are not only remembering and honouring those in the past who chose

to believe that they were new creations, and to live as if they were instruments of God's new creation for the future, we are reminding ourselves and each other that

God is waiting for us to believe it and live it, too.

We ...are the saints of God between Alpha and Omega.

Not the saints we read about from the distant past.

Not the saints who are gathered in heaven for eternity.

Not in those times, but now.

Not in those places, but here.

Between Alpha and Omega is our time to live like saints.

Not the saints we think we are, when our egos make us too full of ourselves to leave room for humility.

Or the saints we never could imagine being when we judge ourselves harshly for our faults and failings.

But the saints God says we are becoming, one day at a time, and every step of the way, between Alpha and Omega!

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