



God's Homecoming – Touchpoint for November 3, 2021

Revelation 21:1-6 (NRSV) The New Heaven and the New Earth

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.

God will dwell with them;

they will be God's peoples,

and God's very self will be with them;

God will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.”

And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” And, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” Then it was said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.”

Grace and peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.

“See, the home of God is among mortals.

God will dwell with them;

they will be God's peoples,

and God's very self will be with them;”

This coming Sunday is All Saints Sunday in the Christian community. Now we normally think of saints as those people who are above it all, transcending the world and its problems. And we aspire to be saints as well so this vale of tears and travails and woes will be nothing but a distant memory, a foggy recollection.

But the passage from Revelation is a rather interesting one. It doesn't speak of the end goal of life as going UP to be with Christ—with the Divine—rather the Divine comes down to be with us.

Listen again to the words from this passage:

“See, the home of God is among mortals.

God will dwell with them;

they will be God's peoples,

and God's very self will be with them;”

Over 50 years ago there was a book, play, movie, entitled “Up the Down Staircase.” It was about a teacher in a school who continually made the mistake of trying to go UP the DOWN staircase. While the story is about a teacher at a school, it could just as well be about American Christianity.

We keep wanting to go UP to be with God, when the whole of the biblical story is about a God who comes

DOWN to be with us.

Think about the creation story. God creates the world and then saunters around the garden in the cool of the evening to be with Adam and Eve. And in the wilderness wanderings, God tents with God's people. A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Think of the Christmas story: "The Word becomes FLESH and DWELLS AMONG US." First as a baby in a manger and then as a man hanging on a cross. Even after the resurrection in Mark's gospel, the Christ simply goes back to Galilee to meet us there. Think of the Pentecost story: the Spirit is poured out on the apostles as they sit in a room and wait.

The symbol of our faith is a cross. Not exactly a symbol of spirituality but rather an instrument of torture, though we do like to make up 'theories of atonement' about it. Because we are much more comfortable with a theoretical God who is at one with us theoretically, rather than a God who meets us in the depths of our being and human existence. And continues to dwell there.

We are always trying to go "UP the DOWN staircase" to be with God, when God has already come down here to be with us.

Apparently, the Mystery doesn't understand that its purpose is to get us OUTTA HERE!!! Why, the Divine actually thinks that its place is with mortals.

*"See, the home of God is among mortals.
God will dwell with them;
they will be God's peoples,
and God's very self will be with them;"*

Which would mean, apparently, that all those people who are caught up in rapture theology are living for the time when they will be taken up to be with Jesus.

Well, guess what, it appears they will be told once they meet Jesus up there that they need to make a U-turn. Because ultimately—in the end—no one is 'Left Behind'.

"And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, COMING DOWN out of heaven ..."

You see, ultimately, the Mystery is the Alpha and the Omega, AND NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND. And no one is left behind because God isn't going anywhere.

Let me repeat that, NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND BECAUSE GOD ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE.

"And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, COMING DOWN out of heaven..."

"My home is with mortals, and I will dwell with them."

In the book of Revelation, Mystery speaks, "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Now if the Mystery is the beginning and the end of all things, then the beginning and the end are the same. If all came from the Mystery, then all will return to the Mystery because the Mystery is the one in whom WE ALL

live and move and have our being. If the beginning and the end are the same, and in the beginning, God declares us 'good' then what will God declare us at the end? The same.

Goodness and grace are our origins. Our foundations. They are also our endings.

In the beginning, God is dwelling with humanity in the Garden. In the middle, the Word becomes flesh and dwells among us and the Spirit is poured out on us. And in the end, God declares, "My home is with mortals, and I will dwell with them."

I don't know, are you catching a theme here? I know it's all rather subtle. Why if only the Bible spelled it out in plain English, or even Hebrew and Greek?

But seriously, how do we miss it—what's wrong with us? Why do we keep thinking being with the Divine is something we have to DO or somewhere else we need to GO?

So perhaps we need to rethink what a saint is: not someone who floats above the concerns and worries of the world but someone who is intimately connected to them and the Mystery's presence in the midst of them. Perhaps we need to rethink what a saint is and realize that, from a biblical perspective, a saint is anyone who is "Down to earth," "Well grounded," "Salt of the earth." Oh wait!!! Isn't that what Jesus called his followers? The Salt of the earth.

A saint is anyone who understands that being with the Divine is not the result of something we have to do or somewhere we have to go. The Divine has taken on flesh and continues to do so to this day. The finite is always containing, carrying, and communicating the infinite. It's here and now where we experience the Mystery. And it will always be so. Heaven is experienced here and now and so is Hell.

To put it another way, you don't have to go anywhere to find Jesus. He's come to find you.

I mean after all, the parable of the 'lost sheep' isn't about a sheep that wanders off to find God so he can slap a sticker on his bumper that says, "I Found It!" No, it's about a Christ that comes to us—not only when we are staying safely within the fold—but one that comes searching for us even as we wander off.

"My home is with mortals, and I will dwell with them."

That's the point of this meal, isn't it? Jesus is with Judas in his betrayal. He's with Peter in his denial. He's with Thomas in his doubts and unbelief. He's with you if you don't do a damn thing—and apparently, even if you do.

Do this to "Re-member Me,"

Because,

*"See, MY home is among mortals.
And I will dwell with them;
they will be My peoples,
and My very self will be with them;"*

Amen.

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Songs

Be Still

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God

You Lord Are In This Place

(Keith Duke)

You Lord are in 1)...this place.
2)...my heart. 3)...my mind. 4)...my life.
Your presence fills it.
Your presence is peace.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

Healer of Our Every Ill

(Marty Haugen)

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow. Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope
beyond our sorrow.

You who know our fears and sadness. Grace us with your peace and gladness.

Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts. *Refrain*

In the pain and joy beholding, how your grace is still unfolding

Give us all your vision God of love. *Refrain*

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

(Taize Reflections)

Benediction

The Lord Bless You and Keep You

(National Lutheran Choir, Peter C. Lukin)

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you. To shine upon
you and be gracious unto you. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord lift up the light of
his countenance upon you. And give you peace....