

mini sermon for 18Aug2020  
Revelation 21:2-6a

This is the end.

Well, we decided to extend these shared MCC outdoor worship gatherings through September—because how could we waste the opportunity to be together on a gorgeous evening like this?! So although this would've been the last one, it's not *that* end.

Still, it's the end of this series. Next, we'll switch to a new theme, around the fruit of the Spirit. This ending set has focused on the theme: "Surely, God is in this place." Not just this place around the memorial garden, or in pretty summer evenings, but through the pandemic and all, with a vision offering assurance through these days.

With that, our reading tonight goes to the end of the Bible, nearly all the way to the back. This is the end, my friend.

Now, I don't want to sound fatalistic about the end and things ending. You're maybe overwhelmed by that already. Death looms large: the big end. The way things used to be is gone in the past and will we ever do such-and-so again. The end of summer, the end of being outside, the end of warm weather. That also means school is starting, which is its own struggle and ending of freedom and loss of one bit of leisure or ease or having had things figured out.

Plus, there's the dire sense of politics with an impending ending lurking through all of it, that problems we face are bad enough already and we're in danger of even worse trouble. You don't need that scare. You don't need to be dredged and dragged through that sludge and sorrow.

But those are important realizations as we encounter Revelation and the end of the Bible. Revelation knows our real worry.

See, the most typical view is that Revelation is about The End, the endtimes, predicting what is finally going to happen...eventually. Our faith does have a component of that. With the good news of the resurrection at our heart, death does not have the last word, and evil does not win, and no lie will live forever. We don't just believe the long arc of

the universe bends toward justice, but that it is all held in God's caring and powerful, redemptive embrace. This biggest picture is good and worthwhile.

But I suspect you would like something besides that it'll be okay longterm eventually, while you go back to the grindstone and back into the trenches. You don't just want endurance for these days and hope for the distant future, but you probably would like some possible hint of goodness now.

And that is actually the more important message of Revelation. Not only about a distant weird forecast where an earthly wasteland will have a few happy survivors. What the story is more importantly trying to reveal or un-veil is a truth hidden but real for us right now, a vision for living our lives when we're worried and scared and sad and trying hard.

God is not waiting and letting all the suffering run its course only eventually to come in for final clean-up. Revelation wants you to know the important message that God is with you right now. The home of God is among humankind. You are not waiting to escape the vale of tears and be escorted off to heavenly clouds. God comes to you. God's home, God's power and commitment are here for you. The presence of God is with you to wipe away every tear, from the beginning to the end.

Even as we expect more. Even as we expect more opportunities like this. Even as we enjoy quiet, pleasant evenings. Even as we expect good things will come as we figure out months ahead. Even as we expect elections and hard work ahead. Even as we expect a vaccine and returning to the life we like and need. Even as we still have sorrows and pains and tears that need to be dealt with. Even as, finally, we need death to be undone. Even waiting for the capital E end, still you know the ending, with this vision: God is with you, making God's home in your home, with you, to be always present in promise and love and wiping away tears and confronting sorrow and leading the way to life.

This is the end. And it's only the beginning.  
Alleluia.