

Easter 5C 2010  
Revelation 21:1-6  
Sermon for Advent LC  
May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010

**“This is what Matters”**

Dear sisters and brothers, grace to you and peace from God the Father and our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

What really matters? On Monday, I stood at the grave of a person I had never met. I was asked to come and preside at the graveside service for a dear saint simply because the other Pastor had an emergency. So I went, not knowing exactly what to say or what to do that would offer hope to a grieving daughter in the midst of a deep sadness as she said goodbye to her mother. So I did what I thought I could do- I opened up the Holy Scriptures and I read from them. And the verse that I stumbled upon was the passage from Revelation- our second reading. And in that moment it was as if God was saying to all of us there- this is what matters...this promise...this hope...this proclamation of what God does for you...this is what matters. After the brief service was over, the sexton of the cemetery who was standing back during the service came up to me and asked what the passage was that I read from Revelation. I told him, and he said, “ah...it’s perfect for so many reasons”. He then explained that he had just lost a dear friend at an early age and was struggling with what to do with it...and these words about a new life that God gives us is what matters. This is what matters friends...that God loves you and that nothing on this earth can change that. That’s the heart of our faith...that’s the power of our belief...that’s the promise of our Lord who found glory in the most inglorious ways of a cross- this...this is what matters.

Here the word of God for you again... **“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See, the home of God is among the 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, for the first things have passed away. See I am making all things new....It is done! I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.”** Friends, that is what matters- that is all that matters right? Come Lord Jesus...right! You see those words are powerful, have a lot to them, have an ultimate hope that provides a vision of what will be because of Jesus but what does it do for you today? The skeptic in me says great---but what about now...what about today when the tears are still flowing, the hurt still rages, the pain of brokenness still dominates this world...what about today, now, here, in your life. Someone asked me that recently- she said, how do you believe in something you can’t see and cling to the hope of a future when the present is so terrible? Well...the vision of the future effects the present- the vision of this future and the promise of a redeeming God gives us strength to work through the pain, the distress, the sorrow and to celebrate the joy even more in our life. This vision that this scripture gives us today is a vision for how God will rule the world and how God does come to us today- not just at the end. It’s already...and not yet. God has come and claimed you and in claiming you promises to be with you through all of this...and set you free from it all at the last- then there will be no tears, there will be no pain, there will be no bad. This is what matters!

You know in many ways faith is a risk– a gamble– believing in that which you can't see. But think for a minute about your life of faith– wherever it is, wherever you find your belief today– what is it that gives you hope? The promise of a God who comes to you as the Revelation reading says takes courage truly to hold onto doesn't it? The fact is this– faith is a risk...but a great risk, a risk worth taking and one that when we do take is greatly rewarded and then sends us forth into our real world, where life happens and the need for this hope is great. Faith above all is a gift– a gift of the God who created you a gift from the Lord who redeems you– but faith is hard. And once faith starts to become real for you maybe again, maybe for the first time, maybe for the one hundredth time you will most definitely hear the words of The Gospel from Jesus for today as your calling– to show love even in the midst of hard times, to claim love even in the midst of sadness and even hate– to sacrifice your good for the good of your sisters and brothers– to give of yourself for the sake of the world. Faith...the gift from God is a gift that calls you to be different than the world, to be bold in your life for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel promise that God loves the world– so much– that he sent Jesus to take away all the pain in the end and give strength to stand on right now. This is what matters.

So what really matters? God matters, the promise of a Lord that is love matters. But what matters to you? This I know...God has called you by name, has promised to love you and keep you forever not when you die, not in the end, but now– while you are alive and well, while you celebrate good things and mourn hard things– God promises to make all things new– today...so what is it that you need to have made new? What is it that you need to allow God to wipe away and replace simply with his great love? Only you know...so be honest...give it to God, and hear this in response..."I will wipe away every tear from your eyes and mourning and crying and pain will be no more– See I am making all things new!" This, my friends, is what matters.

God Loves you and so do I. Amen.