



“Is It Coming Soon?”

Pastor Andy CastroLang

June 2, 2019

Scripture (CEB):

Revelation 21, 22 (excerpts)

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ I heard a loud voice from the throne say, “Look! God’s dwelling is here with humankind. God will dwell with them, and they will be God’s peoples. God will be with them as their God. ⁴ God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”⁵ Then the one seated on the throne said, “Look! I am making all things new.” Then that one also said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”⁶ And they said to me, “All is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will freely give water from the life-giving spring. ⁷ Those who emerge victorious will inherit these things. I will be their God, and they will be my children.

Revelation 22:16-17, 20-21

¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to bear witness to all of you about these things for the churches. I’m the root and descendant of David, the bright morning star. ¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’

Let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’

And let the one who is thirsty come!

Let the one who wishes, receive life-giving water as a gift.”

20 The one who bears witness to these things says, “Yes, I’m coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

Sermon:

It's getting pretty bad.

The ice is melting.

The seas are rising.

But they are also choked with plastic.

It is the largest species die-off since the last age of dinosaurs.

The planet is warming faster than the worried scientists even thought it would.

There, did I depress you?

If you read a paper, listen to the news, watch the talk shows...you have heard these things.

Our children, and our children's children read about zombies and dystopian futures, watch apocalyptic movies, play end of the world (and beyond) video games. Whether it is our young people, or ourselves...at our worst, we look at the mess, and crawl back into bed, or crawl into a bottle...a pill bottle, a wine bottle...I don't think there's much difference...we crawl away in an effort to cope.

To mask our despair. To manage our despair. To keep that bitter question away: is the end of all things upon us? And...what will happen to us? Is it coming soon? What shall we do?

This is not an easy time.

We are not an easy species. We have the ability to create beauty, and love deeply, and imagine brilliantly.

And we are also violent and selfish and shortsighted.

We want to be sensible, reasonable, wise.

We often are not.

We are paradoxical and we are conflicted, and we would rather be clear and rational.

But there is something else to us as a species too.

We are mystical, we are visionary, we hope even in the face of our fearful chaos.

And the hope I celebrate with you each Sunday, the paradox we accept, the mystery we embrace...is that our confusing, uncertain, humanness is nonetheless *cherished*.

That, as the call to worship from psalm 97 declared:

“The Light of the Holy One enlightens all the world, all of creation is clothed with majesty through you, all creation mirrors your love throughout the cosmos.

And:

Heaven delights when a hardened heart breaks open and recognizes Love’s ever-patient Presence within. Yes, you forgive our wrongdoing, and yes, you welcome us home.”

- Because we are created by the infinite goodness and power of Love, we do not despair.
- Because we shine within, even if it is but dimly, with the light of the Divine...we are not lost in darkness forever.
- Because we have the freedom to turn from our broken ways, and seek the healing power and freedom of the love of the Holy One, we are not condemned, but forgiven.

And no matter how chaotic our world, how dreary our lack of vision and will to repair and restore the world...we do not have the last word.

In this last book of scripture, in this last chapter of the last book of scripture, we hear otherwise, we hear a greater word than ours.

- The “bright morning star”, the crucified and resurrected Lord of the universe says, “Come.”
- The descendant of the lineage of David, promises, “Let the one who wishes, receive life-giving water *as a gift.*”
- “Life giving water” is the gift of God, and it is offered freely. Now, and at the end of the world.

Revelation was a book written at a time that seemed utterly chaotic, like the end of the world.

No one was safe, and confusion and chaos seemed to reign. Persecution and fear of death seemed to be everywhere.

At such a time this strange little book was written and concluded not with final words of annihilation, but with words that are the promise of life.

Can it be? The waters of life are a gift given freely?

- Given us by the One who loved us so dearly that violence and hatred are overthrown, sorrow is overthrown, that death is even overthrown!
- Given us by the One who knew our humanity intimately, and showered us with the gift of Love, even when we were less than loveable!
- Given by the One who did not leave us in the darkness of despair at the evil within the human community...but redeemed humanity through the great power of life that has its source in Divine Love.

It is another paradox, that we cannot deserve or earn our gift of Love from the Divine Source of all Life.

Yet, it is written that it is a **gift** for anyone “who wishes” life. Do you wish for life?

Go within. Go into the deep silence of your fear and your longing, and seek Life from the Source. ***Hear the promise of Love, that does not end in annihilation but in the sight of the “New Jerusalem” where the Divine Love is all in all.***

If we live with that vision, if we dare trust in that Power...then apocalyptic cannot drive us to despair. We can sing, and work, in hope and trust in the greater promise, and the greater vision of the God who knows us, loves us, calls us into tomorrow.