

July 26, 2009

Scripture: Revelation 22 :1-5

Sermon: "For the Healing of the Nations"

Have you ever played the "What if" game? You know, when you let your mind wander and you wonder what if...What if...I had a million dollars, what would I do with it? What if...the world was made of chocolate cake? What if...no one was starving, there was world peace, people shared their resources, the environment was cared for? What if...the King of God came today, what would it look like?

What if...

This is what John is doing as he is writing the letter Revelation. He has had a vision and he is thinking about the what if's that would happen when the Kingdom of God comes to earth. John is imagining a world at peace, imagining a world thriving, imagining a world in true relationship, living fully in the presence of God. He is imagining a world that is full of God's all encompassing grace. He is imagining a world where there is no more hurting, where there is no more dying, where there is no more fighting, where there is no more suffering, where there is no more pain.

He is letting his imagination wander to this amazing place because the reality that he faces is so far from this hopeful picture. His community is suffering from persecution. His community is oppressed from the mighty powers of Rome. His community is being torn apart through the hands of pain, power, and dominance.

His community is broken. The reality his community faces is not up-lifting. And the joy, the hope, the experience of new life is being drained from his community.

And so John's mind begins to wander and he has a vision, a vision of New Jerusalem, a vision of a place of peace, a vision of a place of grace, a vision to give hope to his community.

He imagines a place where the cool waters of God flow through the city, offering all a chance to be clean, offering all a chance for healing, offering all a chance to grow. He imagines a place that has the tree of life along side this river and the tree never is empty. In fact, each month, there is a new fruit, in fact each month, there is a new opportunity for nourishment, in fact each month, there is a new opportunity to end the people's hunger.

And the best part about this place is that the presence of God fills every nook and cranny. There is nowhere one can go that God does not know where one is. In this place, people are invited to see God's face, to be in relationship with God, to experience fully the presence of God in their lives.

John imagines a better time for believers. John imagines a better place for believers. John imagines a better situation for believers.

So John shares his vision, this vision of harmony, this vision of healing, this vision of peace with his community to give his broken, suffering community hope. He wants to let his community know that there is more than this world has to offer. He wants to let his community know that

this world does not have the last word. God does. He wants his community to know that this vision of peace, this vision of healing, this vision of grace is theirs to claim in their present reality because they are called to live their lives fully in the presence of God.

John wants his community to know HOPE!! And not just the hope that says, well maybe we will wait around and hope for something better. John says that the hope of God, the hope that we have as people of faith, the hope that we proclaim is an active hope because “at the heart, hope is not about a promise that all things will end up happy and that we just need to wait. At the heart, hope is a challenge to do something about ourselves and the world.”

John wants his community to know that Jesus didn't come and simply say hope for a better world. Jesus came and said that there is a better world and God wants that for us as God's children. Jesus came and said that we are called to Love God and to love our neighbors, not through a passive love, but with the love that God loves us, with a passionate, an all-consuming, an all-inspiring, an all-encompassing love that knows no end, that knows no boundaries, that knows no limits.

A love that inspires hope for all of God's people. A love that brings healing for all nations. And John says that the first thing that we must do when we are faced with the vision of the Kingdom of God is to repent. To go beyond simply saying I'm sorry for my deeds and actions that have hurt others. We are called to recognize how we have contributed to other's pain, to other's sorrows, to other's suffering and then to do something about it.

We are called to live an authentic faith here today in our present reality that finds strength and encouragement and hope from the future possibilities of the Kingdom of God. We are called to live out our vision of authentic faith here on earth by offering up opportunities to all of God's children for healing, for grace, for peace, for love.

We are called by John's vision “to shape a way of living that incorporates worship, justice, peace into everything that we do.” We are called to let this world know that we are Christians by our love. We are called to live lives of authentic faith by recognizing the image of God found in all of God's children, by making justice for all of God's creation, by praising God from whom all blessings flow. We are called to share the hope of God's Kingdom with all by living in true relationship with all of our brothers and sisters through Christ.

What if...the Kingdom of God came to reality today, what would it look like? What if...there was peace on earth? What if ...there was no more hurting, there was no more suffering, there was no more brokenness? What if...

That was the question asked by 32 people 165 years ago as they gathered on Railroad street in an unfinished woolen mill. That was the question asked by this community of faith 165 years ago. That was the question asked by a group of people who felt the called to come together and form Midway Christian Church.

What if...God places the call upon the hearts of the people of Midway to form a community of faith that goes beyond their doors and shares the word of God with all? What if...the people inspired by their faith reach out to the young orphan girls and give them an opportunity for

education? What if...the people decided to make justice happen for all of God's children and help the African American community in Midway form a church, form a place where they can worship, to form a place of hope? What if...the people called by their faith realize that everyone is entitled to a home that is safe, secure and affordable? What if...the people of this community of faith, this Midway Christian Church, embrace their mission of Welcome and live out this mission of Welcome through Worship, Education, Love, Community, Open Table, Mission and Evangelism?

What if... What if... What if...

We have before a vision of the new Jerusalem where the crystal waters flow through the city and wash everything clean. We have before us a vision of the tree of life that bears a new fruit every month to nurture and nourish the people of God. We have before us a vision to give us strength for the journey, to give us renewal, to refresh our hearts and minds as the people of God.

We have a vision of the ultimate hope... To live and "to be in the presence of the God who is beyond all and in all." We have a vision of God's all-encompassing love and grace. We have a vision before us of what if...what if the Kingdom of God came to reality today.

We have before us a vision of hope...not the passive "let us wait and hope that something better comes along". No we have a vision of hope...an active challenge to live out an authentic faith as the people of God who live lives where worship, justice, peace and grace are incorporated into everything that we do. We have a vision of hope that inspires us to go out into our community and share our word of Welcome, that inspires us to be in full relationship with God, that inspires us to praise God from whom all blessings flow.

What if...The Kingdom of God came to reality today, what would it look like? What if...The Kingdom of God came to reality today, what would our role as people of faith be? What if...the Kingdom of God came to reality today, how would we as the people of God be used for the healing of all nations?

What if...

May we embrace the hope of the Kingdom of God and live in out in our present reality today.

Amen

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