

Sunday 12th November 2017



Remembrance Sunday

Red



Collect

O God of truth and justice, we hold before you those whose memory we cherish, and those whose names we will never know. Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world, and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm. As we honour the past, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever. **Amen**

Revelation 21:1-7 English Standard Version (ESV)

The New Heaven and the New Earth

21 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. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place^[a] of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^[b] and God himself will be with them as their God.^[c]" ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment." ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

Footnotes: a. or *tabernacle*. b. some manuscripts *peoples*. c. some manuscripts omit *as their God*.

COMMENT: John has a vision of the whole of creation redeemed and renewed. This awaits those who remain faithful through all their trials and thus makes those bitter experiences endurable. We know from examination of earlier chapters in Revelation that the circumstances faced by the Christians fits best into the period of the Flavian emperors, Vespasian and his sons, Titus and Domitian. This was a time when the imperial cult flourished. Though there was as yet no compulsion to participate in these quasi-religious rituals, anyone who got involved with the law courts or was required to take an oath, would be bound to do so. In that period the chief threat to the church was not physical danger but social exclusion, economic barriers and religious temptation. How much like our own times! Perhaps the most important insight of the passage is that "the home of God is among mankind" (vs.3). This reaffirms what God has done in coming into the world in Jesus Christ

for the single purpose of redeeming the world and reconciling humanity and all creation to God's original purpose. That would bring about a joyful, creative relationship of God and humanity in which all suffering and death have been overcome, not just for mankind but for all of the environment on which we so much depend by virtue of divine providence for our needs. The author clearly has the Incarnation in mind as the means above all which establishes God's presence in the world. Finally, he is unequivocal that in making all things new is a process of re-creation by which the old is transformed into the new. The old world in its depravity may be doomed to vanish before divine holiness; and faith sees the hand of God refashioning the whole into something marvellously new. "The agonies of earth are but the birth-pangs of a new creation."

John 15:9-17 English Standard Version (ESV)

No Greater Love

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. ¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants,^[a] for the servant^[b] does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Footnotes: a. Greek *bondservants*. b. Greek *bondservant*.

COMMENT: As in several other places in John's Gospel, chapters 14 to 16 use a familiar literary device of the time, an extended and stylised discourse. The style is characteristic of John's Gospel. These discourses contain profound theological affirmations of who Jesus is and what he means to the Christian fellowship and to the world. This is particularly true of the several places where John quotes Jesus as saying "I am" The theme of this brief excerpt concentrates on self-sacrificing love 'agapé' as the unique focus and life force of every Christian. Behind this passage stands the intense shadow of the cross and the contrasting power of God to raise Jesus from the dead and give the Holy Spirit to all who believe. So John takes us to the heart of the Christian discipleship: Love for others as God has loved us. He interprets the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross as his loving sacrifice of himself for us in obedience to God's loving will and purpose, not only for himself but for the whole world. In the way that John has phrased this tradition, there can be no greater love for one's friends than to follow in Jesus' footsteps even to the point of death (vs. 13). The emphasis on friendship has considerable significance. The Christian way of life exists only in effective human relationships. Every human institution - the church included - works best when relationships are firmly based on mutual respect and humane values, at the root of which is love. As we move toward a global civilisation no other value system will prove worthwhile. The selfless relationship of 'agapé' love has been proven in the crucible of the divine-human gift of God, which is Jesus Christ. This is what John is having Jesus say throughout this

passage. This is the fruit that Jesus prophesied his friendship with these few disciples would yield (vs. 16). It began with his love for them and their love for each other. We are called to make a similar witness in our time and place.

Psalm 51 *Miserere mei, Deus*

℟ Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

¹ *For the Choirmaster. A Maskil of David*

² *after Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, "David has gone to the house of Abimeleck."*

³ Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.

In your compassion blot out my offense.

⁴ O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin. **℟**

⁵ My offenses truly I know them;
my sin is always before me

⁶ Against you, you alone, have I sinned;
what is evil in your sight I have done. **℟**

That you may be justified when you give sentence
and be without reproach when you judge,

⁷ O see, in guilt I was born,
a sinner was I conceived. **℟**

⁸ Indeed you love truth in the heart;
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.

⁹ O purify me, then I shall be clean;
O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow. **℟**

¹⁰ Make me hear rejoicing and gladness,
that the bones you have crushed may thrill.

¹¹ From my sins turn away your face
and blot out all my guilt. **℟**

¹² A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.

¹³ Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit. **℟**

¹⁴ Give me again the joy of your help;
with a spirit of fervour sustain me,

¹⁵ that I may teach transgressors your ways
and sinners may return to you. **℟**

¹⁶ O rescue me, God, my helper,
and my tongue shall ring out your goodness.

¹⁷ O Lord, open my lips
and my mouth shall declare your praise. **℟**

¹⁸ For in sacrifice you take no delight,
burnt offering from me you would refuse,

¹⁹ my sacrifice, a contrite spirit.

A humbled, contrite heart you will not spurn.

℟️ Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned.

²⁰ In your goodness, show favour to Zion:
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

²¹ Then you will be pleased with lawful sacrifice,
(burnt offerings wholly consumed),

then you will be offered young bulls on your altar. **℟️**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,**

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: Scholars now believe that those words came from the pious attempt of later generations to attach as much of the Psalter to their legendary tribal hero as a way of increasing his stature as nation builder at the zenith of his glory. It has in mind David's adulterous assignation with Bathsheba. The psalm expresses in the simplest words what true repentance involves. First comes the appeal to God trusting God's infinite mercy and steadfast love. Only God's grace can absolve the sinner from whatever transgressions have been committed. A prime moral insight is not only to acknowledge one's sin, but to be aware that even when one commits an offense against one's fellow humans, one sins against God. Thus whatever penalty must be paid is fully justified. The acceptance of one's sinful nature follows naturally (vs. 5). Paul notes this – Romans 3:10, Romans 3:23 Romans 5:12. The lament turns from self-abasement to a recognition of and appeal for what God can do to restore him to a morally acceptable life. He needs to be cleansed, first of all. There may well be an element of ritual cleansing in his appeal (vss. 6-9). Hyssop was used in ritual cleansing of lepers. The prime virtue of the restored penitent, of course, is a pure heart and a righteous spirit. The lament ends typically with a vow to make a thanksgiving offering in the presence of a congregation of fellow worshippers.

Post Communion

God of peace, whose Son Jesus Christ proclaimed the kingdom and restored the broken to wholeness of life: look with compassion on the anguish of the world, and by your healing power make whole both people and nations; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

The Blessing

God grant to the living grace, to the departed rest, to the Church, the Queen, the Commonwealth and all people, unity, peace and concord, and to us and all God's servants, life everlasting; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**