



**Day 5 | Monday, March 11, 2024**  
**Presenter: Matthew Pyrc, SJ**

God speaking through the prophet Isaiah said “I am about to create a new heaven and a new earth.” Then at the end of the bible, in the book of Revelation Ch 21, we read the fulfillment of this prophecy: Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

“Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them [as their God].

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain...

Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy. We tend to understand this as something far off, something that will happen after we die. But if we were to only see Jesus’ fulfillment of this prophecy as the eternal paradise of heaven we would be wrong, we miss the mark.

If that is our understanding I invite you to listen deeply and you can hear Jesus' words to the scribe that we read in the Gospel on Friday - You are not far from the kingdom of God.

We get so caught up in everything happening in the afterlife we lose sight of the here and now. Our prayers turn toward seeking God to rescue us.

But that is not who God is. God does not rescue us, because God REDEEMS us! God did not promise an escape from this world, God promised a new heaven and a new earth.

I am about to create a new heaven and new earth, Isaiah uses a verb that is very familiar to readers of Genesis 1—create, bara in the Hebrew. The God who created the universe out of nothing will create a new universe, a new heaven and earth, in place of the old one ruined by sin and evil. It will be so “good” that people won't remember the former things. Instead, people will simply rejoice forever in what God will create.

This is what the Easter resurrection inaugurated. Easter was the beginning and it continues moving out into the world. What God has created is still being created in us today.

For something new to begin, something old must pass away. Jesus' kingdom redeems the world, turns it upside down. One way to look at redemption is to see that God finds a way to bring good out of any situation. God finds a way to bear fruit.

Thus we have Jesus teaching in the beatitudes, blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land, blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted, etc.

Now, you may be thinking it does not feel like a blessing, when the world is falling apart.

It does not feel like a blessing when cancer invades a body.

It does not feel like a blessing when a loved one dies.

That's because we are not rescued from this life. God is about redeeming this life, this earth. God finds a way but that way can be painful.

I'm sure it did not feel like a blessing to Martha when she told Jesus her brother Lazarus had been dead for four days.

It did not feel like a blessing when St. Peter heard the cock crow and he realized he had denied Jesus not once but three times.

It did not feel like a blessing when Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry Jesus' cross.

It did not feel like a blessing when Mary held Jesus' dead body as it was taken off the cross.

For Neither Lazarus, not Peter, nor Mary, nor Jesus himself was rescued, removed from their situation. But God did find a way to redeem each situation.

It is through the pain and sorrow that Jesus went and so to do we. It is a road that we would not have chosen but it is one in which we find grace. Sometimes the deepest pain requires the fiercest love.

"If God is your father, let him rescue you!" But there's no rescue. Instead Jesus dies inside the humiliation and pain. God raises him up only after his death.

This is one of the key revelations inside the resurrection: We have a redeeming, not a rescuing God. This redemption happens here, in this life. The new creation has begun AND we have the promise of God that one day there will be no more tears, grief, or dying.

We know that one our mourning will be turned into dancing. But for now, here in this time, God graces us and strengthens us. As the psalm states: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear for you are with me.

God has united God's self with us. We were baptized into a death like Christ so that we may share in his resurrection.

And I will close with this poem from Jan Richardson.

## Beloved Is Where We Begin

If you would enter  
into the wilderness,  
do not begin  
without a blessing.

Do not leave  
without hearing  
who you are:  
Beloved,  
named by the One  
who has traveled this path  
before you.

Do not go  
without letting it echo  
in your ears,  
and if you find  
it is hard  
to let it into your heart,  
do not despair.  
That is what  
this journey is for.

I cannot promise  
this blessing will free you  
from danger,  
from fear,  
from hunger  
or thirst,  
from the scorching  
of sun  
or the fall  
of the night.

But I can tell you  
that on this path  
there will be help.

I can tell you  
that on this way  
there will be rest.

I can tell you  
that you will know  
the strange graces  
that come to our aid  
only on a road  
such as this,  
that fly to meet us  
bearing comfort  
and strength,  
that come alongside us  
for no other cause  
than to lean themselves  
toward our ear  
and with their  
curious insistence  
whisper our name:

*Beloved.*

*Beloved.*

*Beloved.*

*—Jan Richardson  
from Circle of Grace*

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