

## Pastor Roy's sermon from November 4, 2018

Trees turning from green to different shades of green, orange, yellow, and red. The other colors were always there but you couldn't see them until the green was taken away.

The book of Revelation and parts of Zechariah, Ezekiel, and Daniel are a variety of literature that was common in Jewish writings a couple centuries leading up to the time of Jesus Christ and the early church. The writers create stark visions with images to communicate God's promised presence. The children of God are never abandoned or lost. Despite persecution, disappointment, and death, the life of God's children is held secure in God. The end is a glorious reunion—regardless of appearances otherwise. The faithful will be held faithfully. Christians, such as John in Revelation, wrote in this style for the same purpose—to encourage the children of God in faith, that they are beloved of God regardless of world events.

Today, some think of these Apocalyptic writings as prophecies of the future, but when they were written, they were written mainly to help God's people interpret current events, to encourage the persecuted to have hope. Hope for the future is fine, but what we really need is hope for the present, that our faith has meaning—that God is with us. Since God is with us now, the future is less frightening, regardless of how it unfolds. God will still be with us. The beauty of Revelation is that it weaves the church's worship into John's proclamations about current persecutions and hardships. Our work is to join our worship with that of all of creation and to rest in God's strong mercy which never disappoints.

In today's passage when the one seated on the throne says "See, I am making all things new," and "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," John is reminding us of our faith right now as much as telling us about the future. What is going on now is what will be going on in the future.

For John, the appearances of death and loss, crying and pain have been replaced with a new reality, the reality of God with us. The love of Christ with us--God with us. The power of Revelation is that it reveals that the power of faith is all about God, not us. God brings down evil. God is creating a new heaven and a new earth. God is calling together the saints in a holy choir, a holy army. We participate, but we do not create. We do not make it happen. We don't even make our own faith happen. We simple rejoice to grow in faith as God grants it.

Today, All Saints Sunday, we celebrate God's gift of community in grace. The Saints are not good people. The saints are people who have been pulled into the mercy of God, the creative love and life of God and respond with joy.

Jesus raising Lazarus in today's Gospel lesson is a sign of the life faith in God transforming our death, loss, disappointment, frustration, limitations into a new life, a new work of grace and peace.

Today we celebrate the life of the saints, which is what we are, the beloved children of God. Today we celebrate communion as a sign of our beloved community in faith, in the forgiveness and all embracing love of God.

Thanks be to God.