

February 8-Written Service

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Special Music: Jeremy Russell

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship

Leader: How wondrous! A new heaven and a new earth!

All: The old, bruised and angered, fearful and alienated, will pass away.

Leader: In its place God will offer new hope and peace.

All: God will dwell with His people forever.

Leader: Open your hearts and spirits today.

All: Let's praise the Lord today and always!

Song: How Can I Keep from Singing?

There is an endless song

Echoes in my soul.

I hear the music ring.

And though the storms may come

I am holding on,

To the rock I cling.

How can I keep from singing Your praise?

How can I ever say enough?

How amazing is Your love!

How can I keep from shouting Your name?

I know I am loved by the King,

And it makes my heart want to sing.

I will lift my eyes

In the darkest night

For I know my Savior lives.

And I will walk with You

Knowing You'll see me through,

And sing the songs You give.

How can I keep from singing Your Praise
How can I ever say enough?
How amazing is Your love?

How can I keep from shouting Your name?
I know I am loved by the King,
And it makes my heart want to sing.

Prayer

Song: Revelation Song

Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain;
Holy, holy, is He.
Sing a new song to Him who sits on
Heaven's mercy.

Holy, holy, holy,
Is the Lord God Almighty;
Who was and is and is to come.

With all creation I sing
Praise to the King of kings;
You are my everything
And I will adore You.

Clothed in rainbows
Of living color,
Flashes of lightning,
Rolls of thunder.

Blessing and honor,
Strength and glory and power be
To You the only wise King.

Holy, holy, holy,
Is the Lord God Almighty;
Who was and is and is to come.

With all creation I sing

Praise to the King of kings;
You are my everything
And I will adore You.

Filled with wonder, awestruck wonder,
At the mention of Your name;
Jesus, Your name is power,
Breath and living water,
Such a marvelous mystery.

Holy, holy, holy
Is the Lord God Almighty;
Who was and is and is to come.

With all creation I sing
Praise to the King of kings;
You are my everything
And I will adore You.

Announcements

Special Music: Living Hope sung by Jeremy Russell

Congregational Prayer

Song: #712- Be Still and Know

Be still, my soul! the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.

Be still, my soul!
Thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways
Leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul!
Thy God doth undertake
To guide the future
As He has the past.

Thy hope, thy confidence,
Let nothing shake;
All now mysterious
Shall be bright as last.

Be still, my soul!
The waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them
While He dwelt below.

Be still, my soul!
The hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,

When disappointment, grief,
And fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot,
Love's purest joys restored.

Be still, my soul!
When change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed
We shall meet at last.

Offering/Offertory

Offering Song: Open Our Eyes

Offering Prayer

Children's Message

Scripture: Revelation 21: 1-7

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

⁵He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

⁶He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

Message

Intro

This has been a challenging passage to think about
I know it’s upbeat and filled with hope
But it’s written in the context of implied endings rather than solely new beginnings
And I struggle with endings
Relationships that seem forever ended
Friends and family lost to the grave
I’ve had different lyrics from the 90s running through my head this week that I don’t completely want there
Maybe the best example is this:
I hate when things are over when so much is left undone

Scripture- Revelation 21:1-7

Endings

We often look at endings
And we think that’s the last page
The curtain falls and all goes dark
And it’s especially difficult when things don’t end the way we would have liked
We struggle with the feeling of finality to it all
In John’s day
John wrote Revelation while exiled on the island of Patmos for his faith
In all of the gospels John is usually mentioned right alongside his brother James
They were fishermen together
They followed Jesus together
They were both in Jesus’ inner circle
They even had a shared nickname that meant “sons of thunder”
By the time he was on Patmos, John had outlived his brother who was beheaded
The first of Jesus’ disciples to be martyred
The fact is that before John was sent into exile Christians were being tortured and killed across the empire
Crucified
Burned alive
Fed to lions
Church history shows a cruel creativity in how those first believers were treated
The idea was to punish and silence them, once and for all
As John writes this book, he is painfully aware to the impact of these endings

In ours

Let's be honest, Christians are still being martyred around the world in alarming numbers during our lifetimes

Just because we don't see it in person doesn't make it less of a reality
But even in our corner of the world, endings can be difficult
The finality of it all, especially when it is sudden or the details are painful
It feels like a loss
A permanent sour note that forever echoes in those memories
These are the last words
And they tell of defeat and suffering and injustice
We too, would love to hear about a new beginning
But none seems possible

Gardens and cities

We started the new year and this series on new beginnings on Genesis 1, page 1 of your Bibles
Today we flipped to Rev 21, by the other cover

We saw that history begins in a garden
And it ultimately moves to the city

A new city, a heavenly Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven
A city where the resurrected people of God will live again and for eternity

This passage, and multiple others in Scripture, correct some modern misunderstandings about what comes next

Earth is not burned up and destroyed in a fire while we all "fly away" into the sky
escaping to some distant heaven
Earth is refined, restored, remade
To be what it was supposed to be from the very beginning
To be the city, filled with the fruitful and multiplied children from Adam and Eve
To be finally back on a track that we'd jumped off of so long ago
Everything finally the way it was intended
And not only is this world starting again

We start again too

Reborn, refined, restored, and remade ourselves
To finally be the people we have been striving to be this whole time
To be the finished product of the transformation that God has been working in us over our lifetimes

New beginnings

The Bible is clear that this is the new beginning for those who follow Christ
A beginning that is once and for always free of death, mourning, crying, and pain
Those things are the old order

This beginning leaves them eternally in the past

John is given the assurance in his heavenly revelation on Patmos that he will see his brother again

And he will see all those who have suffered and died for their faith

In a great resurrected reunion
With no more death, mourning, crying or pain
With Jesus Himself there in the center of it all
The ultimate example and proof that death does not have the final word
Pain and suffering do not have the final word
Hate and injustice do not have the final word
Just like John, we need this reminder when we struggle with what feel like endings
The good news, at the dead-center, heart of the Christian story is death *and* resurrection
There is more to come, life still to be lived, memories made, songs to sing
With God at the very heart of it all, where He was always supposed to be
Here's a song lyric that's been better for me to remember
Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end

Song: #403- Christ is Made the Sure Foundation (vs. 1,2,4)

Christ is made the sure foundation.
Christ the head and cornerstone,
Chosen of the Lord and precious,
Binding all the Church in one,

Holy Zion's help forever,
And her confidence alone.

To this temple, where we call Thee,
Come, O Lord of hosts, today.
With accustomed loving kindness
Hear thy people as they pray,

And Thy fullest benediction
Shed within its walls away.

Laud ad honor to the Father;
Laud and honor to the Son.
Laud and honor to the Spirit;
Ever Three and ever One.

One in might and One in glory
While unending ages run.

Benediction

Postlude