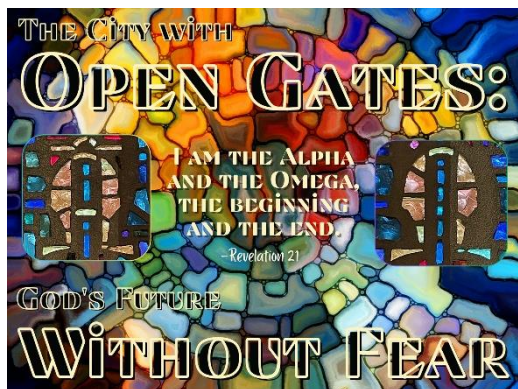


# A SERMON by Rev. Victor H. Floyd: July 27, 2025



## Revelation 21:1-7, 22-27; 22:1-5

*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. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.' And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' Then 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 water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their*

*God and they will be my children.*

*I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and God's servants will worship God; they will see God's face, and God's name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.*

*Patmos, Prophecy & Poetry.* Revelation was written by John, exiled by the empire on the Isle of Patmos. Most of us have not heard of the 20th-century poet, Robert Lax. His life journey included writing for *The New Yorker*, serving the poor in New York City, performing as a clown with the Cristiani Circus in Canada. Eventually, Robert Lax gave up the noise in his later years and exiled himself on the Isle of Patmos. In his poetic masterpiece, *Circus of the Sun*, he reflects on Revelation, the book of completion, and its antecedents—the diverse creation stories from Genesis 1 & 3, Proverbs 8, and John 1.

"Morning" by Robert Lax

*Sometimes we go on a search  
and do not know what we are looking for,  
until we come again to our beginning.*

*In the beginning (in the beginning of time to say  
the least) there were the compasses: whirling in  
void their feet traced out beginnings and endings,  
beginning and end in a single line. Wisdom danced  
also in circles, for these were her kingdom: the sun  
spun, worlds whirled, the seasons came round, and  
all things went their rounds: but in the beginning,  
beginning and end were in one.*

*And in the beginning was love. Love made a sphere:  
all things grew within it; the sphere then encompassed  
beginnings and endings, beginning and end. Love  
had a compass whose whirling dance traced out a  
sphere of love in the void: in the center thereof  
rose a fountain.*

*Fields were set  
for the circus,  
stars for shows  
before ever  
elephant lumbered  
or tent rose.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Robert Lax's 1959 "Circus of the Sun" from *Circus Days and Nights* (Overlook, 2001).

FOR TODAY, I INVITE YOU TO THINK OF THE BIBLE AS ONE LONG NARRATIVE. There are many tangents, but the overarching theme is the union and reunion of heaven and earth, God and God's people. Since that whole Garden of Eden debacle, God and humanity have been negotiating a new relationship.

*It's Not the End of the World.* Let's be honest. When most Christians consider the book of *Revelation*, they don't think "hope." They think beasts and blood, fire and conspiracies, wars and rumors of war, A Rottweiler leaving a human baby on the steps of a mansion in the old *Omen* movies. They think of doomsday clocks and escape pods—of billionaires with deep thoughts choosing who gets out and who stays behind.

But when it comes to the Bible, the book is always better than the movie. Revelation is not about *escape*—it's about God staying with us. "*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... and the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...and God will dwell with them.*" Revelation doesn't end with an evacuation. These final chapters of scripture end with God moving in. Healing the relationship we've negotiated since Genesis, God moves in.

God doesn't toss out creation and start over. Instead, God takes what has been broken, saves it, makes it whole. God redeems. God renews. This isn't a vision of fleeing from a world in flames. It's a promise that this world, "with devils filled"<sup>2</sup> and with all its scars and stories, is still worth saving.

*Temple Closed, City Open 24/7.* The New Jerusalem comes down as a radiant, beautiful city. What does verse 22 forward tell us about the world to come? 1) There's no temple. 2) The light never goes out. 3) The gates never close. 4) The nations will walk by its light. 5) And the rulers of the earth—for us that means the corporations and their billionaires—bring in their treasures as offering to the city of God, in a stunning reversal of dystopian tropes and as antidotes to recent headlines. No temple? That's an astonishing statement from John, a Jew, writing to the early Jesus movement. God will no longer need a temple made by human hands, because everything everywhere will wake up to *the new reality that God is everything everywhere*. Everything and everyone, holy. The city's gates never shut? That's a declaration that there are no outsiders in the dominion of God. The world to come is not a gated community for the few. There is no fear of the stranger or the foreigner. This is a city bursting open, filled with glory and color and all kinds of people. In *Star Trek* the Vulcans call the cosmos "infinite diversity in infinite combinations." Poet Robert Lax wrote of creation as God's big-top, the circus of the sun. But Revelation is more than a poetic flourish. It's God's real answer to fear.

*God's future is fearless.* Think of how much of the world is driven by fear:

1) The President of the United States recently released<sup>3</sup> a deep fake video, depicting the former president being driven to his knees in the Ovalle office and then shackled. This is not normal. This is not okay.<sup>4</sup> It is unacceptable conduct, inciting violence and spreading lies. My ordination covenant outweighs any fear. Our faith calls us all to speak out. If enough people object, it can change.

2) Last Friday in SF, every individual who showed up for their immigration hearing was arrested.<sup>5</sup> They were following the court's instruction yet arrested by armed men who hide their faces. This is also the opposite of the gospel of Jesus. How dare Christians support this! Our government is stoking fear and division of immigrants "invading" our country, or as the president says, "polluting the blood of our country"<sup>6</sup> brazenly referencing *Mein Kampf*. If enough people object, it can change.

3) And though we live in an empire that cultivates fear and division, this week the tide, maybe, began to turn.<sup>7</sup> Accusations of groomer and pedophile now threaten to take down the very people who ginned up those terms against their political enemies and the transgender community. May we pray for the thousands of women victimized by Epstein's human trafficking and may we have the integrity to render Justice for those who participated or looked the other way.

To follow Jesus requires resisting the fear of empire and the mistaken religious leaders of the day.<sup>8</sup> Because Christ is the opposite of fear. Revelation shows Christ's future where: Every culture brings in its unique gifts. Every community, every nation walks in God's light. The great deceiver has been defeated. And every person is healed through the tree of life. That's God's version of a holy city! Not exactly the *walled-off* fortress Martin Luther imagined in our opening hymn but a city where God's glory comes in all colors and expressions, where the gates

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<sup>2</sup> Referencing the opening hymn sung earlier in the service. Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" which goes: *And though this world, with devils filled/ Should threaten to undo us / We will not fear, for God hath willed / the truth to triumph through us...*

<sup>3</sup> "Trump Posts Fake Video Showing Obama Arrest" by Matthew Mpoke Bigg, *The New York Times*, July 21, 2025, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/21/us/politics/trump-fake-video-obama-arrest.html>

<sup>4</sup> Rev. Paul Brandeis Raushenbush & Rabbi Dr. Jay Michaelson, *The State of Faith* (podcast), Interfaith Alliance, July 26, 2025, available at <https://stateofbelief.com/2025/july-26-2025-faith-followers-and-the-files-jay-michaelson-and-the-epstein-cover-up/>

<sup>5</sup> "ICE arrests all adults without children at S.F. immigration court today" by Margaret Kadifa, *Mission Local*, July 25, 2025, available online at <https://missionlocal.org/2025/07/hed-ice-steps-up-arrests-at-s-f-immigration-court/>

<sup>6</sup> "Trump's latest speech echoes fascist rhetoric" by Ruth ben-Ghat, *Protect Democracy*, November 14, 2025, available online at <https://protectdemocracy.org/work/trump-latest-speech-echoes-fascist-rhetoric/>

<sup>7</sup> Raushenbush & Michaelson

<sup>8</sup> He wasn't crucified for praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was crucified for subverting religious and imperial corruption.

are *never* closed. This is why people of faith need not fear the future. We are saved by grace, and there is and will be plenty of grace.

*The Church Models the City.* But what does this mean for us now? The New Jerusalem, is not a someday dream. It's a blueprint for what the church is called to be *now*. The Reformed tradition teaches us that we are not waiting to be saved later—we are being transformed, saved, reformed in the right now. The kingdom of God is at hand. Our worship and service, our justice and love—it's all part of participating in God's ongoing creation. God's justice doesn't reduce—it restores. God's love doesn't wall off—it welcomes in.

*Live the Vision Now.* Rather than wringing our hands, we are called to usher in the day of the Lord both personally and collectively. Until God drives into the neighborhood—pulling a U-Haul teeming with cats—until then, we will continue to feed and shelter people without condition, welcome refugees with joy, proclaim boldly that Black lives do indeed matter, celebrate queer human beings as equal human beings. defend reproductive dignity as something personal, correct economic injustices and labor for healing, and build communities where no one has to hide their truth, or defend their children's pronouns.

*World Without End.* God's story isn't one of withdrawal—it's one of presence. From the Garden of Eden to the New Jerusalem, God chooses to dwell among us. Let go of fear, and live into the promise of a future—a city with open gates—where all can walk by the light of love and justice.

In the name of the one who is surely coming soon: Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.<sup>9</sup>

We believe in God;  
who is older than eternity  
and younger than our next breath;  
who is beyond describing  
yet knows us all by name;  
who inspires faith  
yet cannot be contained by religion.

He rose from the grave as living proof  
that what is laid down in faith  
will be raised in glory.  
He ascended to heaven  
that he might be present  
at all times  
to all people.

We believe in Jesus Christ,  
flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone;  
He came in the body  
to give worth to every human life.  
He touched the untouchable,  
loved the unlovable,  
forgave the unforgivable  
and endured slander,  
persecution and death  
in order that through suffering love  
God's kingdom might come on earth.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
who leads us into truth and freedom,  
who gives good gifts  
to all God's children,  
who inspires research, enables prayer,  
and wills  
that human economics and politics  
should prioritize justice,  
care of the earth  
and the healing of the nations.

We celebrate the potential of the Church,  
the life in our bodies,  
the yearning in our souls,  
the promise of good things in store  
for those who love the Lord.

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<sup>9</sup> Revelation 22:20

