

Sermon for The Sixth Sunday of Easter

Date: May 26, 2019

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

First Reading: Acts 20:17-35

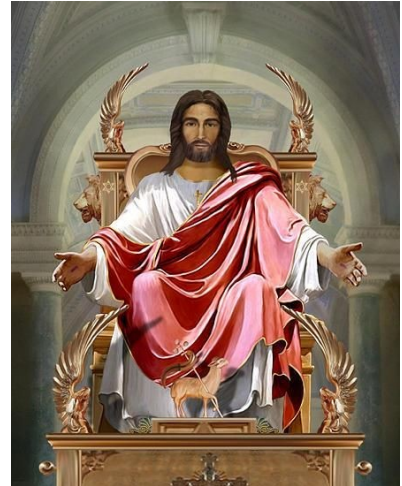
Second Reading: Revelation 21:1-7

Gospel Reading: John 10:22-30

Sermon Text: Revelation 21:1-7

Sermon Title: All Things New

Introit: Psalm 55:4, 16–18; antiphon: v. 22



Hymns:

LSB 822 – Alleluia! Let Praises Ring

LSB 706 – Love in Christ is Strong and Living

LSB 781 – We Give Thee but Thine Own (v.1-2)

LSB 818 – In Thee is Gladness

Liturgy:

Divine Service IV, p. 203



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
FaceBook.com/StJohnsAustin
Twitter.com/@StJohnsAustinMN
FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



Text: Revelation 21:1-7

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and earth had disappeared, and the sea was gone. Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, dressed like a bride ready for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne say, “God lives with people! God will make his home with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There won’t be any more death. There won’t be any grief, crying or pain, because the first things have disappeared.”

The one sitting on the throne said, “I am making everything new.” He said, “Write this, ‘These words are faithful and true.’” He said to me, “It has happened! I am the A and the Z, the beginning and the end. I will give a drink, from the fountain filled with the water of life, to anyone who is thirsty. It won’t cost anything. Everyone who wins the victory will inherit these things. I will be their God, and they will be my children.

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Bible Translation: GOD’S WORD®, © 1995 God’s Word to the Nations. Some readings have been adapted to better reflect the original Greek or Hebrew.

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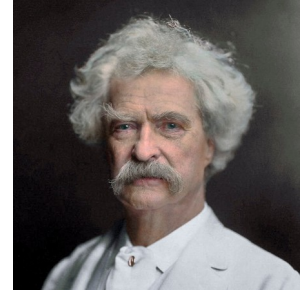
Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace to you and peace in Jesus' name. Amen.

Samuel Clemens, whom most of us know as Mark Twain, was an amazing writer. He was insightful, funny, a statesman and an observer of human culture. Sadly, Mr. Clemens felt his ability to make us smile and laugh at our insecurities and contradictions qualified him to be a critic of God.



He believed that his keen eye for earthly stuff gave him the credentials to pass judgment on the works of God. Of course when Clemens was in front of the general public he felt it wiser to keep such heretical opinions to himself, but when he was with his wife Olivia he was merciless in his criticism of religion in general, and in Christ, Christians and Christianity in particular.

Mr. Clemens once said:

I would not interfere with any one's religion, either to strengthen it or to weaken it. I am not able to believe one's religion can affect his hereafter one way or the other, no matter what that religion may be.¹

The truth is Clemens did interfere with the religion of others. The man who took pride in his ability to accurately observe things about the culture somehow managed to miss the mark when it came to examining himself and what his criticism of Christianity was doing to his wife. His outspoken opinions against the faith, and against the faithful, slowly and thoroughly ground his wife's beliefs down until no faith in a loving God was left to her.



Olivia underwent a time of great depression. Genuinely concerned with his wife's condition Clemens swallowed his pride, set aside his low opinion of Jesus, and asked his wife if she couldn't find some kind of comfort in her Christian faith. With sadness in her face and in her words, Olivia replied, "No I can't... I haven't any."

Looking back on that conversation Clemens later confessed he felt a great deal of guilt because he was the one who had undermined his wife's faith. He was the one who had planted the seeds of doubt in her heart. So strong was Clemens' regret he reluctantly admitted he would have changed things if he had been given the chance. Of course the chance to put things right never came.

1 "Mark Twain – A Biography," ABC-CLIO © 2004

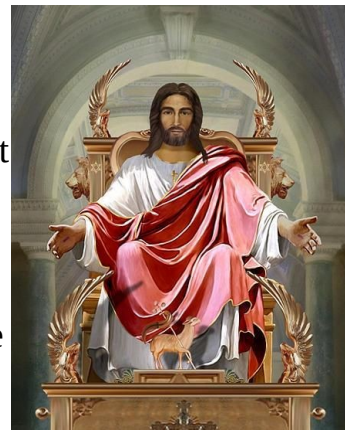
About 150 years have come and gone since Mark Twain destroyed his wife's faith. The passing decades have seen many changes. Earthly empires and political philosophies have risen, had their moments of influence, and then faded and been forgotten. ... and so much more. The world remains a mess where all too often the Christian Faith is accused of doing too much, and not enough, to fix it. Whatever 'it' is. Shades of Clemens still remain.

All of that can seem dark and dismal. It can make you feel hopeless and sometimes helpless. Will the Clemens of the world win? What encouragement is there us? The Apostle St. John has written, in the book of Revelation, words of hope which the Holy Spirit desires to bring to every person in every place.

Listen to God's Good News. He says:

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There won't be any more death. There won't be any grief, crying, or pain, because the first things have disappeared.

The one sitting on the throne said, "I am making everything new." He said, "Write this: 'These words are faithful and true.'" He said to me, "... I will give a drink from the fountain filled with the water of life to anyone who is thirsty. It won't cost anything. Everyone who wins the victory will inherit these things. I will be their God and they will be my children."²



Did you hear that? Our Lord is saying to all who have been overwhelmed, God has promised that He is going to change things, make things better, make all things new. The nasty stuff, the negative stuff, the dark, the discouraging, the dismal, the sinful stuff is going to be removed from your life, and it is going to be replaced by God's gracious Good News.

Those who long for something better, those who are thirsting for the living, spiritual water of life will find the Lord provides, and at no cost to you. He provides exactly what we need in great abundance. That is in fact the very reason Jesus came to this sorry, sinful, sin filled, world.

With His birth Jesus became one of us. There's a song that was popular for a while that asks:



What if God was one of us
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus
Trying to make His way home³

Sadly the song fails to see it. It's purpose is to ridicule those who trust in Jesus. Sadder still, the author of the song is looking for precisely what Jesus came to be. One of us. Facing life foibles just like us, with one notable difference.

Everyday, without a stumble or slip, Jesus lived a perfect life. As a real man Jesus knew He would have to face death, and that gave Him great discomfort. Yet He was not surprised that those who hated Him eventually managed to: manipulate events, falsify evidence and bring circumstances to condemn the Son of God. Crucified on Calvary's cross, on the darkest day of human history the Son of God died. On a Friday that we now call 'Good' because with that death He became the one time perfect sacrifice that would make all things new.

Three days later the entire world was given a glimpse into what the newness of God would look like. The women who had been among Jesus' closest friends went to His grave in mourning and in sadness, but they left that empty tomb different. The Lord wiped away their tears, and ended their mourning. The risen Redeemer had made things new.

He did the same for two disciples that ran to the tomb that morning, for a couple more walking down the road to a town called Emmaus⁴ and then to all but one of the disciples that evening. A week later to all of the disciples and more and more people. After a mere 40 days hundreds had seen Him⁵ and the new thing He was bringing: new life. The risen Redeemer had made things new.

These people, like you, had begun to sip from the waters of life. Their tears were wiped away and mourning was brought to an end. Crying, pain, and sadness are gone. Even death is gone. Jesus made all things, especially the important things, new. Even an enemy as powerful as Death cannot hold us, cannot defeat us. Jesus has made all things new. Death has been turned into victory.⁶

How has the world received God's transforming, blood bought, news of Death's defeat? You know the answer. The world has done everything possible to stomp out the Savior and the salvation His sacrifice won. Scripture is right when it says:

3 Joan Osborne – "What If God Was One Of Us"

4 Luke 24:13-35

5 1 Corinthians 15:6

6 1 Corinthians 15:54

The light came into the world, but people loved the dark rather than the light because their actions were evil.⁷

[Jesus] was in the world, and the world came into existence through Him, yet the world did not recognize Him.⁸



Maybe most shocking of all is that the world does these things without having anything to offer that might be better than the place of the peace, hope and forgiveness which the risen Lord Jesus gives freely to all.

Mark Twain might have tried to laugh off heaven by describing it as a place where all you have to do is:

“go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever.”⁹

That’s Twain’s idea of heaven but not God’s. The world may laugh but He is still the only One who can wipe away every tear from our eyes. He is still the only One who can banish death. He is still the only One who can wipe away our mourning, crying and tears. He is the only One who makes all things new.

There is where we put our faith. In Jesus’ name.

Amen.

7 John 3:19

8 John 1:10

9 Mark Twain – “Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”