

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Confirmation/Easter 5 May 2, 2010 Revelation 21:1-6



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. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He 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." He 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." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the end. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life."

This is God's Word!

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

His name was Hugo – Hugo Alfredo Tale-Yax. Hugo was homeless. It was almost 7:30 in the morning – in New York – when a man with a knife confronted a lady. Hugo intervened. He got between the man with the knife and the woman – and the man with the knife stabbed Hugo. The lady ran away and the knife-wielding attacker – ran away. And Hugo fell to the sidewalk bleeding. Somebody – *anybody* – needed to call 911 – and firemen would have come to try and save Hugo's life! Within a minute or so – people started to come past Hugo. This is the worst part. One person came and took Hugo's picture with his cell phone. One person shook Hugo – moving his head and his shoulder – revealing the blood from the wound. But he left, too! People kept coming and going – 1,2,3,4 people saw Hugo – 5,6,7,8 people saw him. 9,10,11,12 people – like the Priest and the Levite went by and nobody helped! 13,14,15,16 – all the way to 25 – maybe even more! Why didn't anybody help? I heard a psychologist say – it all has to do with fear – because you don't know what to do? Really? If somebody you loved – your wife, your child, your grandchild is lying on the sidewalk bleeding – you don't have a clue what to do to try and make the situation better? Really? Oh, they said – the problem was fear because what? The person was homeless – didn't smell sweetly? Oh, they said – if he was younger, cleaner, prettier, better dressed – more just like me – then I would help? Can the sinful human heart be so cold – so hard – so uncaring? That's the problem – sin! Sin makes people cold and hard enough to stab people. Sin makes us cold enough to run away – or walk away – because it isn't my problem – this filthy homeless person! Jesus loves us – as filthy as can be on the inside because of our sins. Jesus died to save us. Jesus died and rose again so we can live by him forever in Heaven. This 5th Sunday of Easter – this *Confirmation* Sunday – God's Word reminds us:

By Grace Alone--You Are People Of God!

- 1. Jesus will wipe away every tear*
- 2. Jesus will make everything new*

Last Sunday we heard a sermon about Revelation chapter 7. Today our sermon is from Revelation chapter 21 – the second to last chapter of the Revelation to St. John. Chapter 20 ends with a fierce preaching of the Law! **Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life...** We live in a world where people keep records of what they do – on *Facebook* – on blogs – famous people *Tweet* again and again where they are and what they are doing. Digital cameras, cell phones and i-Pods make it possible for people to take pictures of all the different things that they do all the time. Imagine – though our confirmands sit here in their

white robes – if someone kept a record of all our sins. If every time we did something painful or hurtful or harmful or wrong – someone recorded it. If every time a sinful thought crossed our mind – even for a moment someone recorded it – with a time stamp. If every time we had an opportunity to help someone – speak to them a word of kind encouragement or practical help – and we thought only of our self and didn't! Imagine if there was a little recipe card for every sin! We would all be lost. Chapter 20 says, **"The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire!"** I got an e-mail the other day. It was very brief. It was about if you get a grease fire in your kitchen. You turn away from the stove to answer the phone – and suddenly breakfast bacon is literally flaming in the pan! Temptation – to panic – to throw a big glass of water at the flames. A potentially deadly mistake! The water hits the heavier grease – which literally explodes – sending flames and fuel to the ceiling and walls – maybe papers on the refrigerator and the drapes and cupboards – and your whole house burns down. Far better – very carefully drape a soggy washcloth over the top of the pan – killing the flames! Then comes the most painful part of this e-mail video – a very nice lady saying – be very careful. Don't repeat her tragic mistake. You look closely – and you see – her face is painfully scared from a grease fire! That's very powerful! As terrible as a grease fire can be – it is *nothing – absolutely nothing* – compared to the lake of fire in hell! There is no fire on earth – no matter how terrible – that can hold a candle – to the forever fires of hell. Words fail to explain what it must be like – to be thrown into the lake of fire – the second – ultimate – eternal death – from which there is no escape! *To be confirmed today – and fall away before you are 21 – has unspeakable forever consequences!*

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. The sea! The sea is a pretty incredible thing. I had a friend – who was on vacation – by the sea. It is kind of hard wired into my family – we have done things and tried things – because we hate the idea of looking back on a missed opportunity. Sometimes – often times – you get one chance and one chance only. Sometimes – even hesitate – and you are too late! My friend was by the sea. It was stormy – warnings don't go in the water. But then he must have had that thought – when am I going to get the chance again – to literally jump in the ocean. So he jumped into the water and splashed around. But then something went horribly wrong. He was trapped in the tide – the swirling water – and must have hit some of the rocks on the bottom – and he died! The sea – in this world all spoiled by sin – is like on that Discovery show – Deadliest Catch! The waves come crashing down – spilling over the sides of those crab boats – and people get hurt. It's not just salt water stinging in their eyes. They get swept overboard – in the cold dark waters – and they drown! They die! When Jesus comes on Judgment Day – there will be **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.**

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes." It is a very complicated system – that makes little drops of moisture – that overflow – when we are very happy and when we are very sad. There are times of tears all the time. If you think about it – when you were born – perhaps literally – with your very first breath in this world all cold and hard and bright and loud – you cried. And when you take your last breath – if the people you love are around your bed – they will cry, too! Between your first breath and your last breath there are those who try very hard to never ever cry. They try very hard to never ever let anyone see them cry. People they love very much die – and they do not cry. They do not shed a tear. They hold it in – sometimes at an exceedingly high price – they do not let their emotions out. There are some people who are very tender – who have little eve-troughs that overflow all the time. And there are those who are very strong in many ways – and when you see them cry – it's very difficult to watch, too. When we get to heaven God will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will never be pain or sadness – not ever again. It's hard to imagine how wonderful that will be!

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" We need everything to be made new – because the old is all spoiled! I'm confused. I read the other day about garbage – plastic garbage –

floating in the ocean. I thought it was in the Pacific Ocean. It was this ugly plastic mass of half floating—half submerged garbage. How big a pile of floating trash? I couldn't believe this! A mass of trash—not just covering space the size of the state of Texas—but twice the size of the state of Texas? I can't imagine a wad of floating garbage that big! It's called *stew*--floating some place between California and Hawaii. And then I read there is another bunch of plastic junk—this time it's called chunky soup—floating in the Atlantic Ocean. They scooped up a bunch and found it to be plastic bottle caps—shotgun shells, crates, toothbrushes and a boxer's mouthpiece. This wad of trash is doing harm to the fish and sea creatures somewhere between Bermuda and Portugal. Because ocean currents go round and round—this bunch of trash keeps getting bigger and bigger still. Nobody is responsible? Nobody is doing anything about it? It isn't my trash—is it? And that's just the trash you can see! Think about *the stew—the chunky soup* of our sins! They are far more horrible—eternally deadly! Jesus took that guilt upon himself—to save us! Jesus gave up his life—to save us from all our sins. Jesus died and rose again—to make us forever new!

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" It was in March—back when I was in 6th grade. A young woman, just 28 years old—named Kitty Genovese was on her way home to her apartment—after serving drinks and managing a sports bar! It was in the wee hours of the morning—when Kitty drove her-self home—parking about 100 feet from the door to her apartment. A mugger ran up after Kitty. She ran. He caught her. He stabbed her 2 times in the back. She cried out for help. She yelled quite literally, "He stabbed me! Help me!" One of the neighbors actually called out to the mugger, "Let that girl alone!" The attacker drove away—*only to come back again!* Kitty was attacked again and again—over a period of ½ an hour. As many as a dozen neighbors heard or witnessed some part of the attack. But again—nobody actually did anything—until a neighbor named Karl Ross called the police who arrived within minutes. Kitty was still alive when they picked her up in an ambulance—but she died en route to the hospital. How terrible! What would you have done? Would you intervene? Would Jesus make you brave enough to put yourself between the attacker and the victim? There is no doubt what Jesus did—when we were in mortal danger because of our sins. Jesus didn't risk his life. Jesus gave up his life—to save us from eternal death! Jesus died and rose again to forgive us all our sins. And only Jesus can make you strong enough—to keep your confirmation promises—to be faithful—hearing and believing the Gospel—until Jesus brings you safely home to heaven. Amen!

To God alone all glory!



Rev. Anthony E. Schuttz