

Grace and Peace to you for God our Father and from our lord Jesus Christ Amen.

Now a couple of weeks ago I had to say that the end is near. But this week I get to proclaim that we again approach the beginning. We are heading into the beginning of the fall, the beginning of the harvest, the beginning of new smells and flavors, the beginning of new schedules and stresses. But of course we can't begin something without ending something else.

Next week we are going to be starting this biblical journey all over again by jumping back to genesis and continuing our trek from there But this week we find ourselves in the end of the Bible. In the very midst of the end times. But in the midst of the end of everything God only speaks of new things.

“I am making everything new”

In fact God says “It is done.”

God says “To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.”

And then “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb” that waters the tree of life whose leaves bring healing to the nations.

This revelation of the end is about a new beginning. This is not the end of any story or some epic journey. Not even close.

I know for me when I heard all this talk about water and thirst I remembered my time as a camp counselor.

In all my years of working at camp this strange thing has always baffled me. How often all these kids have no idea they are thirsty, how often they refuse to stop and even think if they are thirsty or admit they are thirsty, how often they refuse to stop and take a drink.

We couldn't trust these kids to drink water

As camp counselors, we had to stop right in the middle entire activities and line these kids up up at the water fountains to make sure that they got some water in there systems.

And then you know what would happen???

They still refused to drink! "But I'm not thirsty"

And of course an hour later who's crabby and is complaining of upset stomach and a pounding debilitating headache.

I never realized how much that exact moment must be what it is like for God. Our God who gives water to the thirsty. Our God, knowing better, knowing what all these whiny little kids actually need in order to be

happy and healthy. Going so far to pause everything else in their lives; making sure that they get one little drink.

And the worst part about it is we don't learn. We as adults habitually don't drink enough water. We have to be told over and over the health benefits of just drinking enough water.

We still need to be told to drink. We forget that we need this simple thing so insanely quickly. And the repercussions of its absence come fast and hard.

And we just don't learn. We don't remember. The second our thirst is slacked we feel as though we never needed that life giving, miraculous water in the first place or that we will need it ever again.

In the beginning of our journey here on earth the majority of us had parents who knew a little better. Knew what their children really

needed. And thank God for them. For our parents who brought their children to the font for their children to taste and feel that Holy Water. If only we could keep that knowledge as we move forward on the journey of our life. That knowledge of what we really need! It seems we too often have to learn it the hard way. But thank God we are not alone on that journey. We are never alone. In the beginning, in the end, and for all that time in the middle.

Beginning and the end, all mixed up, all the time. Am I beginning something now or ending something? Beginnings and endings, on purpose or definitely not. Those are what our lives are filled with. And God is in all of them.

God is saying to us that I am in the beginning of your journey, and I am in the end. I am there for every moment of that journey. I will not and cannot forsake you. I am there. I am dwelling with you. I started all of

this. I will end it in my time. You are free to live. Free because it is done.
You are free from fear because I AM who I AM.

I gotta say I thought it was going to be a little weird talking about freedom and life giving water so much with everything that is going on around Houston for this past week. But it's still the message that we need to hear. The message that needs to be said in the very face of the darkest of times. If I had one message to be able to give to all those people it is the message that is given us today in Revelations.

God is dwelling with you. You are not alone. This may be the end for so much and you are in the midst of so much pain, frustration, fear, and desperation, but you are not alone. God is there with you. Our God '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." God is with you.

Always remember that.

As many of you might know that we have a huge group of high schoolers that are going Houston in June. When I first heard that the ELCA National Youth Gathering was going to be in Houston I have to admit was pretty confused. We had gone to New Orleans twice to bring healing after Hurricane Katrina. We went to Detroit and brought the hope of the gospel in the midst of this recession. I know I understood those choices. But Houston, why were we going to this city that didn't really need us? ... Until this week.

The Holy Spirit was and is at work, let me tell you what, ladies and gentlemen.

This was God saying to people and leaders months and years ago, that there are going to be people in Houston that are going to need help. There are people there who are going to need to know that God is there and that God loves them. God knew that Houston was going to need the love of these high schoolers and adults, all proclaiming a risen Christ that dwells with us now.

I got goosebumps when I realized what God had done. I do not for one second believe that God sent that hurricane. No. But God is sending people and help of every kind right now as we sit here. God has been sending people over this past week. And God is going to be sending 30,000 high schoolers in June. Look at our God at work. Look at God coming to God's people. Look at God dwelling with those whom God loves.

This is the God that sends the water of life, who brings healing to the nations. This is the God who is bringing about a new earth. Our God is a

God that gives life! And It Is Done. And it is Being Done. And it Will Be Done.

Our Alpha and omega, our beginning and our end has done it all for us.

In the light and in the dark, in the sun and in the middle of the storm;

this is what we know to be true. Let us never forget it. Amen