

Sunday May 12, 2019
Pastor Douglas Larson

First Lutheran Church

Revelation 21:1-5

Dear Friends in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen

When I was about six years old we had a brooder house of little chicks in the middle of the yard. We also had a dog that was trained to attack or go after something if we said, “Sic’em”. Being young and wanting to make the dog do something I said “sic’em” to the dog in front of these little chicks. He went after them. My oldest brother saw this, called the dog off and took off after me. I took off running too, towards the house, around the house and then into the house past my mother, followed by my brother. She protected me and asked what was going on. Orvin explained and I was sent up to my room for the rest of the night. She protected but also administered punishment.

In our cattle yard by the old barn we had a wooden water tank that had water and mud around it, a couple feet out from it. We also had some wooden planks that came to the end of the mud. I was standing on the end, looking at things. Another older brother came over, stood on the other end and began to make the plank bounce—and into the muck and mud I went, covered from head to toe. I went to the house, where my mother was entertaining friends. She saw me and took me to get cleaned up.

There were usually five of us kids going to school and sometimes six. As we came home and went through the kitchen, my mother would ask what happened or what did we learn today. We all trooped past by saying, “Nothing.” She was interested in us.

When we are young and scrape our knee or get a cut, we come running to our mother to show it. She may put a band aid on it, just look and say it will be okay or give a little tap or kiss. Then we will take off full of energy and go back to what we were doing, fine.

Mothers protect and administer consequences. They clean us up. They are interested in us. They provide care and concern when we are hurting. Mothers give life and nurture. Thank you to all the mothers here today and all who do the work of mothers. You are important and doing the work that our Lord wants you to do. Thank you again on this day.

The Bible passage that I chose for today reminds me of a mother and her care: providing life, nurture, caring and an atmosphere of love and renewal. This passage from the book of Revelation stands near the end of the book, when God has defeated all the forces against God. Then the writer, John sees a new heaven and a new earth coming down to replace the first. It could represent heaven, after death or it could also represent what God is intending to do for the here and now.

I like to think that this is a message of what the Lord wants for his world, for his church, for all churches and for our church, First Lutheran. The voice declares that the Lord will dwell with us, we will be his people. Pain, suffering, mourning, tears will pass away. The old is being replaced. If we see it this way, then the church, this one and all others, will be a place where the weary, the heavy laden with guilt and sin will receive the forgiveness of sins through Jesus. The church will

be a sanctuary, and that is what we call this area of the building: a safe place for renewal and where God is present to help us. A place of prayer and discussion with other believers. The church will be a place of encouragement. We will know that God is not dead or distant, does not sleep. It will be a place of people, not only when in this physical building, but anywhere who will listen to others. I think of how at a school reunion I asked a woman who I hadn't seen in a number of years, how she was. She said she was OK, but it was half-hearted. So I said, it's not OK, is it? She looked me in the face and said, no, it wasn't. She was grieving hard the loss of her son a year earlier. The church, its people become a means to help others get some healing.

At the Synod Assembly last week we heard from representatives from our sister companion Synod in India. One speaker told of the female infanticide, killing of baby girls because the parents didn't want or couldn't afford a dowry for their marriage. The church there speaks strongly against that. The church stands for the dignity of all peoples, of all colors and all races as Martin Luther King, Jr. did in the civil rights movement. The church stands with the LGBTQ community against discrimination and hurt that the world wants to do to them. The church, our Synod raised \$278,000 for the World Hunger Appeal and our national church, the ELCA raised \$23.6 million for the World Hunger Appeal this past year. A new heaven and a new earth our Lord brings through the church that our Lord creates in his world. The church also stands against the forced conversion therapy of adolescents who identify as homosexual. As a church, we stand for the new world not only in this building, but wherever we are present, especially out in the world.

On a rocky and dangerous coast a village had a sentry on the cliffs watching for ships in trouble during storms. The sentry would ring a bell and the town's people would come running, man rescue boats and save the crews. Time and time again they did this. Then one day, someone said it would be nice to have a little shack to stand in as they watched. They agreed and then they built a cabin and eventually expanded to a nice lodge, with comfortable seats, food and drinks, warm and cozy. But then they found they didn't like getting out in the cold rain and wind. So they decided to hire people to go out for them as they watched from inside or sometimes didn't even notice the ships floundering.

Where are the shipwrecks in our community? Where in this community are we called to go out and help? I think we know. And many of you want to reach out to them. Let us be that church of mothering love that goes out in the wind, rain and cold to the shipwrecks of our society. Amen