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Revelation 21:1-6

God's Resolution

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. **2**I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **3**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. **4**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." **5**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." **6**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.

Happy New Year!

I like the New Year. It is a time of adventure and hope. No matter what the past year brought, there is always the New Year. I cannot help but think of what this New Year will bring. For my girls, it means all the delights of childhood. Abby will learn to ride a bicycle and Sydney will learn to walk. For us as a congregation, the New Year will bring a new sanctuary. Talk about fun. Praise God!

It is because the New Year is a symbol of hope that so many of us make New Year resolutions. We pledge to do the things we have neglected. Read more books. Lose a little weight. Save money. Spend more time with the family.

There is a problem with resolutions. It is not a problem as much as it is a limitation. There are things we cannot do no matter how hard we try. For instance, none of us makes resolutions to grow taller. None of us makes resolutions to get younger. These things we cannot do. They are above us, out of our control. These things belong to God.

In our reading from Revelation 21, we hear God make a resolution that only he can keep. In verse 5, God says, "I am making everything new." This refers to the new day. On that day, God will do away with death, mourning, crying, and pain. On that day, there will be a new heaven, new earth, New Jerusalem, and God will dwell with us in a new way. Talk about adventure and hope.

There is a funny thing about the word "everything," it means everything. Most of us would like God to make certain things new. God, make new Crispy Cream donuts so that we can eat a lot of them and actually lose weight. Lord, make our neighbors new. Change them. Make them quiet. Make them have fewer cars to park in front of our houses.

The good news is that God will change them. The bad news is that God is going to change us as well. God is making everything new.

It is humbling to think God must do this work. Most of us think that since humanity made the mess, humanity should fix it. The problem is that we cannot. We try. The Tower of Babel was man's attempt to reach God. That was a disaster. The cross was man's attempt to keep religious order. That was a mistake. Our attempts to fix things never last.

Have you tried to assemble something that was missing some of its parts? If you are like me, you did not want to spend the half hour to take the item back to the store for a new one. Instead, you were going to make it work. Hit it with a hammer. Tape it with Duck Tape. In the end, you had to take back a partially assembled item and exchange it for a new one.

It is the same with this place. We cannot fix it. We do not have the tools. It is above us. God must make it new. That is why we read that the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven. God must give it to us.

This should not surprise you. This has been God's plan ever since the fall. All throughout the Scriptures we hear promises of the new day.

- Isaiah 61:10 says, "I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."
- Ezekiel 37:27 says that God will dwell with humanity, "My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."
- Isaiah 25:8 speaks of God doing away with tears and death, "He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken."
- Isaiah 55:1 speaks of God giving living water, "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and drink!" (Isaiah 55:1).

Jesus is the one preparing this.

- Jesus covers us with his righteousness and makes us his bride: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." (Ephesians 5:25-27).
- Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).
- Jesus conquers death: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25).
- Jesus gives us living water: "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14)

*Oh, blessed day when Christ shall come
And show himself as Lord,
And thousands meet in their new home
Which Jesus has prepared,
Which Jesus has prepared.*

There is one more thing. Notice the present tense. God is making everything new. This means that even today, God is at work. God is at work in places we least expect. God is at work in the shadows of this world. God is working in small churches. God is working in the struggles of life. God is at work in the sacraments: a little splash of water and a bite of bread. God is at work in everything, including you and me whether we know it or not. The very fact that we do not see it, or have our doubts about it is proof that God is not done!

One day the work will be complete. On that day God will say, "It is done!" That will be a glorious day. Until that day, make your resolutions (or not), take up your crosses, love your neighbors, laugh, sing, dance, confess, and live knowing that even now God is making you new.

Happy New Year!

**In Jesus Name,
Amen**