Springfield Presbyterian Church

November 13th, 2022

A New Heaven and a New Earth

1. Introduction

From a preaching perspective, this week is a bit of a funny

week. We finished up a great sermon series, Bob gave our stewardship message last week, next week we will welcome Rev. Fern Cloud to the pulpit and then…if you can believe it…we start Advent! So, for the first time in a while, I had the opportunity to open our lectionary and I realized that this week’s centerpiece Scripture is Isaiah 65. Many of you may not know this, but this is my favorite chapter of Scripture in the whole canon. Maybe you wonder why, out of all the good classics that we think of, so let me tell you why I feel so drawn to this passage.

1. Scripture

Isaiah is painting this beautiful picture of this world that I

would love to live in, right here and right now. It’s a world where there is no weeping or pain, but an abundance of joy. It’s a new creation where we are united, as you think about the ox and the lion who eat together – what a beautiful vision when you look at some of the dissidence in society. In this new place, God hears before I even call – God knows, and God envisions a home for all and a vineyard that will feed all mouths. As the song reverberates in my mind, what a wonderful world.

And you could say to me, and very fairly so, “Pastor Becca, that’s not the world we live in and it doesn’t look like that’s going to change anytime soon.” And you know what? I wouldn’t be able to deny what you say. This vision that Isaiah is sharing is so different from the world we see around us. Trust me, you don’t want to put the lion and ox in the same enclosure – it won’t end well.

I think one of the most powerful reasons I love this Scripture so much is that it can love even the cynic in me. When I cannot see good, when the world feels overwhelmed with news, or I feel lost in a sea of unending tasks that have yet to be met – this vision of the world that Isaiah shares is the farthest thing from my mind. Yet this passage draws me back, it harkens me to bravely inquire, “If this isn’t the world you see today, Becca, where do you see glimmers of it?”

That’s a different invitation, because I can see glimmers of this new world that God is creating. Indulge the big hippie within me here, but when I focus on awe and wonder, I start to see the beauty that God is working here on Earth. When I watch the leaves change color into these beautiful hues of yellow, oranges, and reds, I remember that the Creator of this world is putting on a show for us. I think about the sea, the one that I grew up near, and I know that even when storms come in and the riptide is fierce, the waves will soon ebb and flow as they always do, and God’s constant presence is remembered as the waves wash in and out. I see glimmers of this new world in conversations I have with people, in the power of the written word and images of art, and in holy moments where I can stop and take in a deep breath and look out at the world around me.

Now, there’s another fair response that I would anticipate hearing, and that is, “Things are too tough right now to even see this utopia.” And as someone who wrestles with depression and anxiety, there are moments I can’t see the glimmers either. You can wrap up all these beautiful ideas and put a bow on it, but my brain won’t see it – it doesn’t matter how glamourous you may make it sound. And if that is you today, whether that’s mental health or you are in a place in your life that is shrouded in discomfort and pain and challenge, I want to affirm that it is okay that you can’t see the glimmers. If you can’t hold on hope right now, I’ll hold on hope for you. I know in the same breath that if I were to find myself in a place where I couldn’t see the glimmers, I know that you would hold onto them for me too. That’s what the community in Christ does, that’s what family does – and we are, again, as a song drifts in my head, we are family.

1. Find the glimmers

My challenge this week is going to be simple or difficult,

depending on how far you are willing to go with it. The challenge is: find the glimmers and write them down. What do I mean by glimmers?

I mean those moments, those moments of gratitude, but also those moments where you see God’s kingdom breaking into this world. Get a post-it note, a journal – whatever works for you, and make a note of them this week. Then at the end of the week, look back on what you’ve written down and pray a prayer of thanksgiving.

Here’s a first good start. When I hear the bells ringing this morning, I see God’s beauty breaking into my world. As the hammers hit the bells and we all just listen, the world seems to stop for a moment. I can stop thinking about something that might be on my mind – the bells let me live in the present, right in this moment, and that is a gift and a glimmer.

I decided to keep this sermon short because we have the bells ringing and I wanted us to have plenty of time for sharing in our prayers. Also, I want you to keep me around and I know when I go into overtime, I get in trouble. All the same, you’ve heard the beautiful words of Isaiah, let that sink into your bones. Then, pay attention, to all the gifts and the glimmers of God’s Kingdom around us. And maybe, as we dream together, as we see those glimmers, we can also be a part of making Isaiah’s vision a bit more of a reality here in our lives together. Amen.