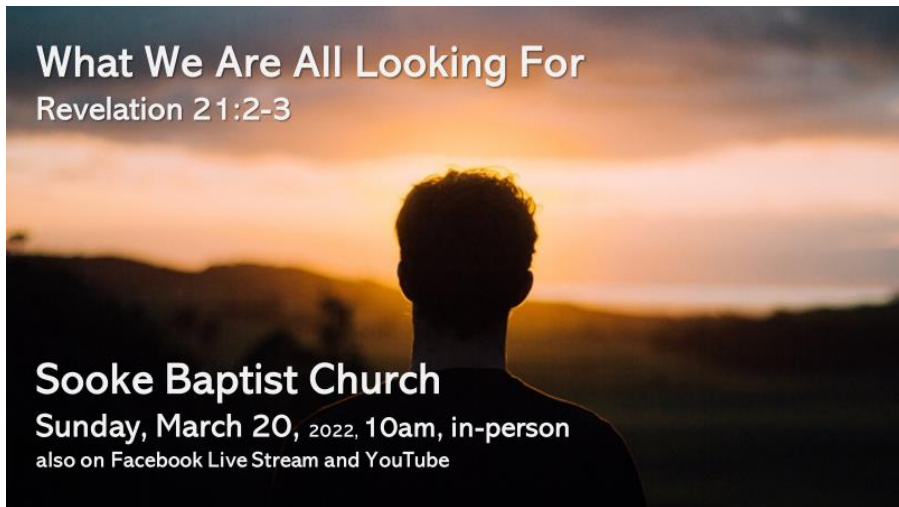


What We Are All Looking For  
Revelation 21:2-3



**Sooke Baptist Church**  
Sunday, March 20, 2022, 10am, in-person  
also on Facebook Live Stream and YouTube

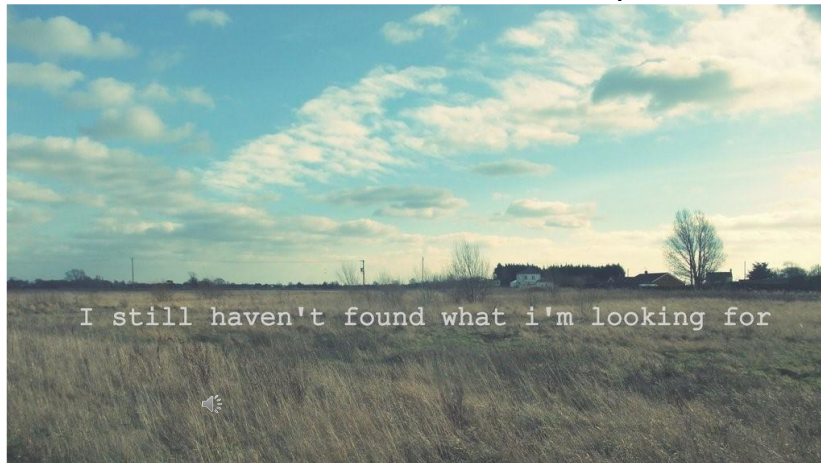
Coffee/Question:  
When you need a break, what setting  
best refreshes you? Explain.



**03:00**

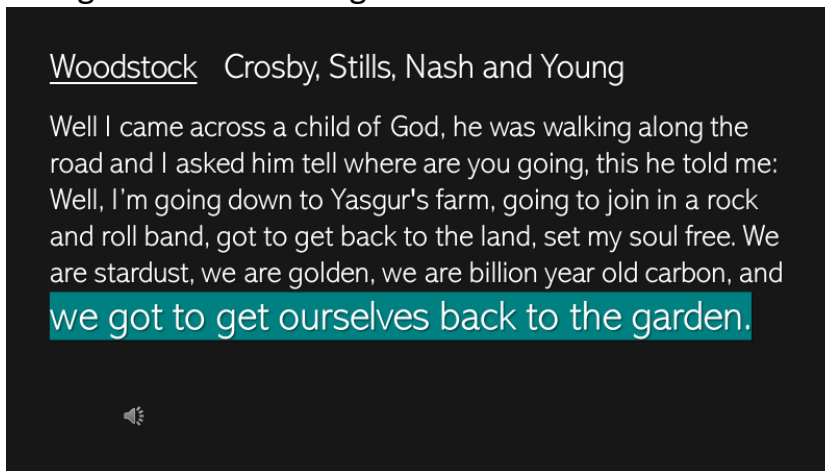
Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden of Eden.  
They lived the remainder of their days on the earth as exiles.  
They could not return to Eden, to that place of paradise, where everything had  
been perfect.

However, there was in them and in every human soul since... a great longing...



We all are in search of something... and yet... what that something is... always seems just beyond our reach... and when we do find something that we think might be it... we find ourselves soon disappointed.

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young in the song Woodstock expressed what they thought that something was.



**"We got to get ourselves back to the garden."**

I wonder if there is not an echo, a faint imprint upon the human soul... a memory... of when the world was perfect and humanity along with it... and we want to get back to that place??

Eugene Peterson writes, "In gardens we stroll and contemplate, smell the roses, pet the unicorns, and commune with God in the cool of the evening. A garden is life blessed and ordered by God. Paradise is a garden in Genesis. Love is a garden in the Song of Songs." p.173-17

Surely the new creation and life in it will be like the garden of Eden?

Almost 4000 years ago... Abraham, who lived like a stranger in a foreign country, also looked forward to something.

There was placed in Abraham a longing that pointed ahead like a signpost... to what God would do at the end of this age.

Look at Hebrews 11: 9-10...

**Hebrews 11: 9-10**

**By faith Abraham made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**



Abraham looked forward... not to a garden, but to a city!  
A city whose architect and builder is God.

But throughout history, cities have been the places most defiant of God and often abusive of his people.

This is not to say that cities are bad... but simply to recognize... as often as cities foster innovation and creativity that leads to human flourishing, so also, there exists within the cities of humanity... a depravity which corrupts... and in turn erodes, depletes and ruins human life and culture.

The list of empires, and the cities they built... which at one time accomplished great things and seemed as if they would endure for generations... is long. But so is the number of them which now lie in ruins.

What history confirms is that...

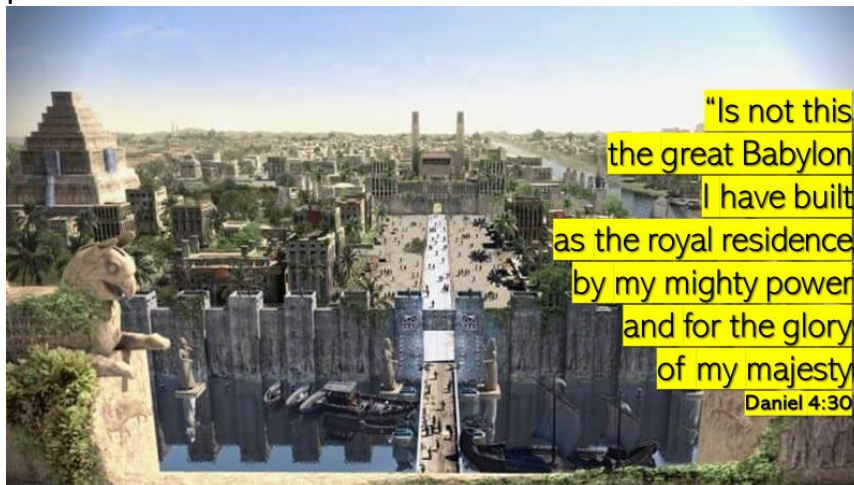


When John wrote the Revelation, the word Babylon was used by God as a code word to describe humanity's efforts... in any generation... and in any place.... to build a life and culture apart from God.

This code word did have an historical reference.

There once was a great city by the name Babylon.

The spirit which defined that city was expressed by its greatest king, Nebuchadnezzar, who said one day as he walked upon the roof of his royal palace...



In John's day... the spirit of Babylon permeated the Roman Empire's capital city – Rome... and since then... other empires and their capitals.

What is shocking to read in Revelation 18, is what will take place at the end of this age.

John saw and heard... a mighty angel who shouted these words...which were words of judgment...

**“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!”  
“Woe! Woe to you, great city,  
you mighty city of Babylon!  
In one hour your doom has come!”**

Revelation 18

Humanity’s way of life that excludes God and is antagonistic towards him... will fall... and it will fall quickly, decisively and be beyond repair.

When it does, and it will, look at what replaces it... Revelation 21:2.



John saw...  
...a new heaven.  
...a new earth.  
...a new city.

And not just any city, but the Holy City... the new Jerusalem...



... prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

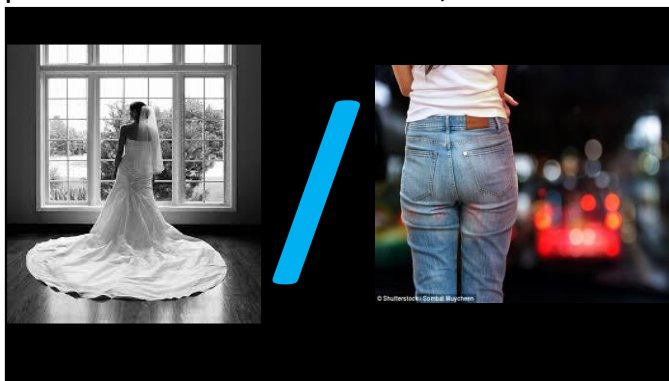
In the book of Revelation there are two cities that stand in contrast to one another – Babylon and Jerusalem.

**Jerusalem**



**Babylon**

Babylon is described as being ... not only a prostitute, but the mother of prostitutes... Revelation 17:5, 15.



In contrast the new Jerusalem is described as the bride, the wife of the Lamb... Revelation 21:9

Babylon never had a stellar spiritual history... but neither has Jerusalem.

It is true that in the past... Jerusalem knew moments of awe-inspiring worship when the presence of God filled the temple with the Shekinah glory.

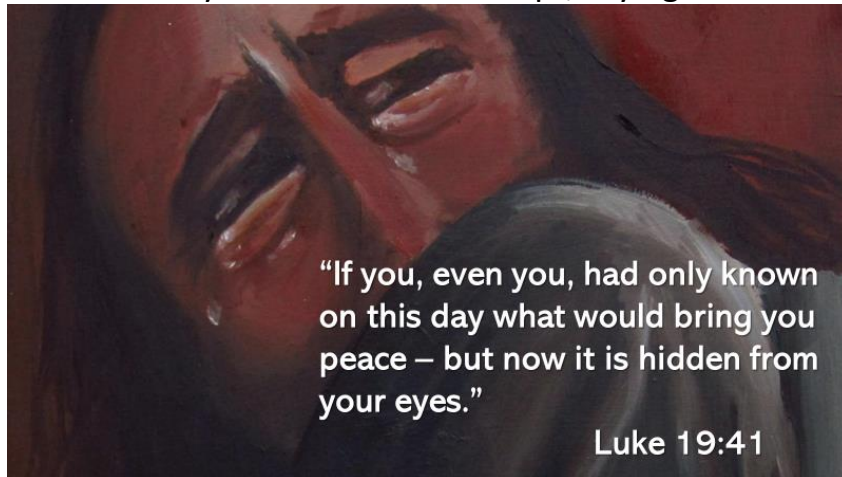
There were times of great preaching...when the prophets spoke on God's behalf and the hearts of people had turned to God in repentance and faith.

Jerusalem was the city where twice a temple had been built for the glory of God ... and where God's presence had dwelled in the Holy of Holies.

But Jerusalem was also the city that was infamous for its child sacrifices. It was the city that had refused to listen to the preaching of Isaiah and had mocked and imprisoned Jeremiah and had shed the blood of many prophets.

Jerusalem was the city twice destroyed in judgment, first by the Babylonians and then the Romans.

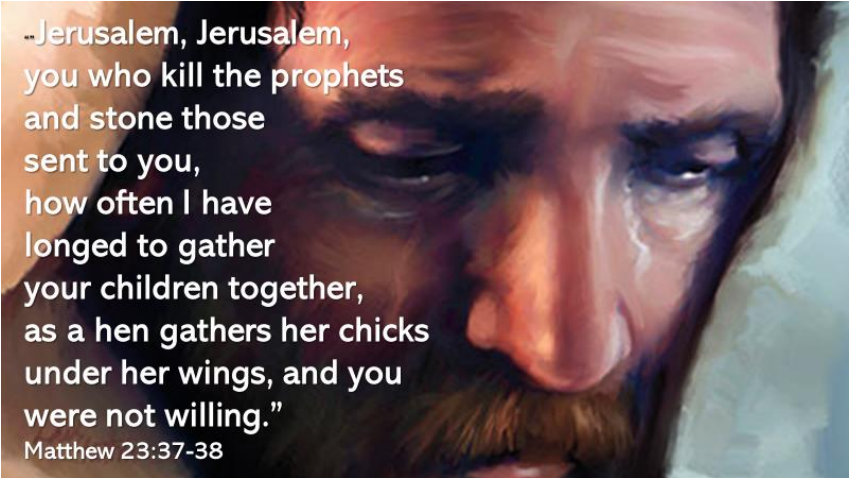
It was the city over which Jesus wept, saying...



"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes."

Luke 19:41

It was the city over which Jesus lamented, saying...



..Jerusalem, Jerusalem,  
you who kill the prophets  
and stone those  
sent to you,  
how often I have  
longed to gather  
your children together,  
as a hen gathers her chicks  
under her wings, and you  
were not willing.”

Matthew 23:37-38

Eugene Peterson writes of Jerusalem, and says...

“Isn’t this [Jerusalem]  
the most unlikely of cities  
to serve as a model  
for the new creation?

Yet here it is.”

Eugene Peterson

p.175

Did you also catch the other phrase John used to describe the new Jerusalem?  
“The Holy City.”

The question was asked by the psalmist David, Psalm 15, **“LORD, who may dwell  
in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?”**

Look at God’s answer.



Who may live on your holy mountain?

The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others; who despises a vile person, but honors those who fear the LORD; who keeps an oath even when it hurts; and does not change their mind; who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

Whoever does these things will never be shaken.

The Scriptures say that those who would live with God... must be guiltless, they must think and speak and act without fault... 24/7/365/80.

These qualifications which are listed in Psalm 15 make it clear... do they not?... that righteousness is needed... to come near to God.

But the testimony of scripture, as well as our experience... confirms... that such righteousness is unattainable by our own efforts.

That said... the good news of the gospel is that God grants righteousness by grace through faith to all who believe in and receive Jesus.

But what about the new Jerusalem, how does it become the Holy City? In the same way as any sinner becomes righteous.

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

Revelation 21:2

GK Beale explains – “Throughout the book of Revelation, the verb ‘make ready’ or ‘prepare’ refers to God’s actions, not human actions.” p.467

It is God who makes all things new.

It is God who makes all things holy.

It is God who makes ready the new Jerusalem to be the home for his people with whom he will dwell.

He does so through the work of Jesus Christ that was realized at the cross, when the life blood of Jesus was offered in sacrifice to pay humanity's debt of sin, which then made possible the granting of his righteousness to all who trust in him.

The sacrifice of Jesus also defeated and disarmed evil and those who practice it, and at the end will exile them to a place where they can no longer cause harm. The sacrifice of Jesus also reconciles all things in heaven and on earth.

It is important to state... in order that we not lose sight of the gospel, that it is beyond human ability and capacity to save ourselves, let alone build a culture that is holy... apart from the grace, mercy, love and goodness of God.

Babylon is what those who reject and refuse God build in this present time. Like the man in the parable who built on sand, Babylon will fall, leaving those who invested their life into building it... with nothing but ruins.

The new Jerusalem, on the other hand, is the home of those who trust in God and his Savior.

It is a home built by God whose foundations will never fail.

Did you see where the new Jerusalem comes from?

Often when people speak of heaven, they speak of it being...up, not down.

But what John saw was the new Jerusalem... coming down.

And as it came down, he described it... and its appearing...



...as being like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

What John saw was the long-anticipated moment when heaven and earth are joined together... when the two who are different... become one, just like a husband and wife become one when they are married.

Throughout history God has been forming his people to be his bride and has planned the place, the home where he will live with them – the new creation and the new Jerusalem.

Look at verses 3-4...

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell 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.”

Revelation 21:3-4

The word “dwelling” and “dwell” in these two verses is important.

- In the OT era, at the temple in Jerusalem... God “dwelt among” his people in the Holy of Holies.
- When Jesus entered into the world, John 1:14 says the Word of God became flesh... and made “his dwelling among us.”

This word “dwell” literally means “to tabernacle.”

In the new heaven and earth God will be visibly present... among... and with... his people and his creation.

One hugely significant implication of this is described in Revelation 21:22.



Revelation 21:22  
I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

Jesus was once questioned about his authority to clear out of the temple... money changers and those who sold animals for sacrifice.

Look at his answer, John 2:19...

John 2:19  
**Destroy this temple\* and I will raise it up again in three days...**

\* The temple he had spoken of was his body.

When Jesus came to the earth, the presence of God was no longer confined to the Holy of Holies between the cherubim and above the mercy seat.

The presence of God was in the person of Jesus Christ.

To see Jesus was to see God.

To hear Jesus speak was to hear the voice of God.

To be touched by Jesus was to be touched by the hand of God.

Because of Jesus and his work of rescue on the cross, his followers are welcomed to come near to God in this present time.

In the time of the OT only the High Priest could come near to the presence of God in the Holy of Holies.

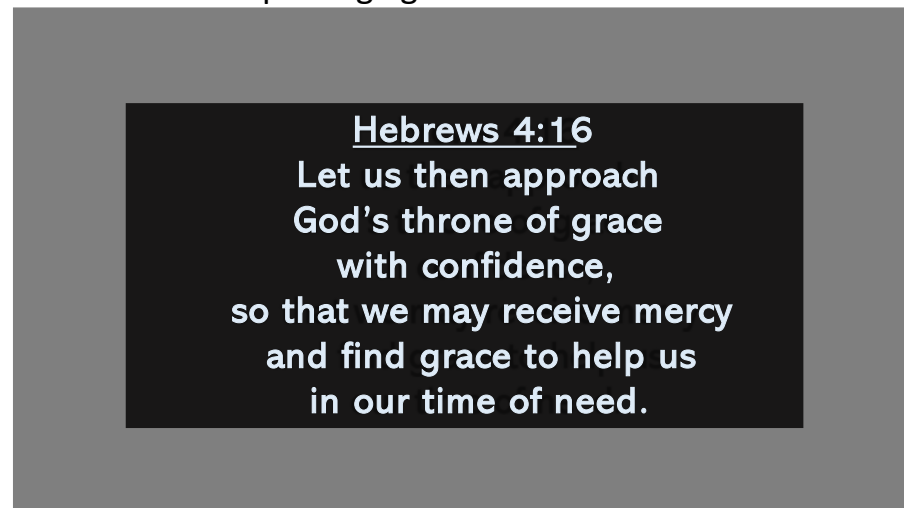
And he could only come once a year... with fear and trembling.

He came having cleansed his body with the washing of water and the putting on of clean clothes.

He came with a rope tied around his ankle.

But most importantly he came with blood to sprinkle in atonement.

Now look at the privilege granted to those who are in Jesus Christ.



And as wonderful as this is, this present reality... is but a taste of the glory that is to come.

In the beginning the triune God... who created human life... invited humanity into relationship with himself... a circle of intimate fellowship and soul-enriching love.

In Genesis 3 we catch a glimpse of what this relationship would have been like... in the description of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

It is assumed this would have been the practice of Adam and Eve on a daily basis... to walk and talk and fellowship with God.

Remember the song – **I still haven't found what I'm looking for?**

The "what" for which every person searches... is actually a "who."

"I still haven't found... who... I'm searching for."

The One we all search for... whether we know it or not... is the triune God who has revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

What is beyond amazing... what we as followers of Jesus strain so hard to comprehend in this present time... is this anticipated future experience ... of having God live among... and with us... in the new Jerusalem.

Darrell Johnson writes of this hope...

“In the new city, Jerusalem... the people of God and creation itself will be drawn into the circle of holy love and fellowship and intimacy... that has forever existed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

Darrell Johnson

p.372.

**My experience of coming back from Colombia.**



We didn't sleep Sunday night because we had to be at the airport at 2am. Instead, we drove through the great valley of Medellin, through town after town, bright with Christmas lights, and then eventually through little towns that were all quiet and asleep.

We checked in, cleared customs, boarded and finally I sat down on the plane at 4:30am...



...ready to snooze, even though it was only an hour flight to Panama City. But after waiting and waiting, an announcement was made that told us we needed to disembark, because the plane had mechanical issues

At 10am another plane safely took us to Panama City where we joined a long line of travelers, who like us, were needing their flights to be re-booked.



Eventually we had seats on a 7pm flight to LA that landed at 12:05am Tuesday. By the time we cleared customs and claimed our baggage everything was shut in LA airport.

We made our way to the right terminal and amazingly there was a representative there waiting for other travelers from another flight. She told us to be at this particular counter at 4:30am.



We were there by 4am – since we had nowhere else to be, and nothing else to do



Once we began the check-in process it came to light that with the delays of our flight our PCR tests had expired and we would need to obtain another one if we wished to be on the 8am flight to Vancouver.

I immediately thought where does one get a PCR test at 4:45am in LA?



But a supervisor who was incredibly helpful gave us an address to Reliant Urgent Care Clinic that was 8 minutes away by taxi and open 24 hours a day.

We drove there, overpaid the taxi driver to wait for us, had a Q-tip stuck up our nose again, and then headed back to the airport.

Just before we made it to the head of the line-up, all of our cell phone pinged, and we had our results – we were all negative for Covid.

In Vancouver we laughed about our adventures, as we sipped coffee and munched on a sandwich.

All of us were eager to get home... as it had now been 48 hours since we had slept.



Mid-afternoon, I said goodbye to Dries and Lexi and each of us headed to our appropriate gate.

In my mind I thought, an hour and a half to go... and I'll be home.... I can do this.



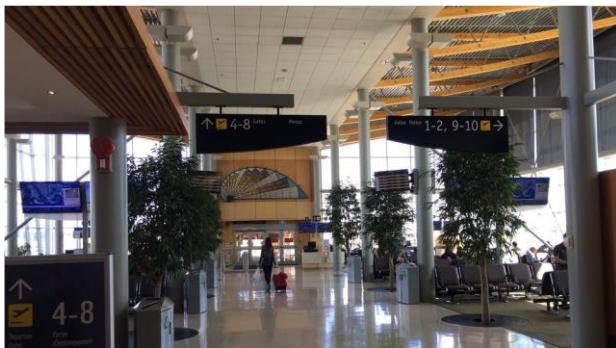
I boarded and sat down in my seat and waited and waited and waited.

I had this sinking feeling that something was wrong – which it was.

This plane too had mechanical issues.

We were asked to disembark and wait as another plane was found for us.

Finally, at 5pm on Tuesday, 53 hours since I had gotten up on Sunday, we landed in Victoria.



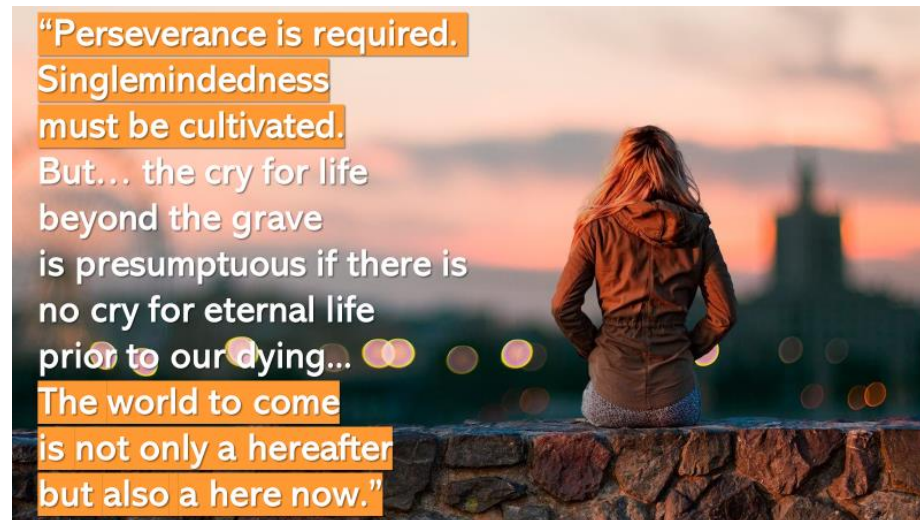
I can't tell you how excited I was to walk into the terminal and into the arms of my bride and say, "I'm so glad to see you. Thank God, I'm finally home!"

When the new Jerusalem descends from heaven, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband, the redeemed will say with tears that stream down our faces, with joy that floods every fiber of our being...

"Thank God! We're home at last!"

**Abraham Heschel** wrote of how this hope impacts the life of Jesus' followers in the here and now. He said...

“Often our eyes are clouded by sin, and we don’t discern the colors. We live through dark ages of history. We are plunged into dark nights of the soul. What do we do then? How does the Revelation direct us?”



EP, p.179

Without this vision of a new heaven and a new earth and a new city, we will almost certainly be reduced to a monochrome existence...



... of moral drudgery, where sometimes it can feel like we’re living a squinty life, just existing, putting in time.

I remind you that the grace of God and the love of Christ are extravagant. I love what Eugene Peterson says about this extravagance... and with this I close... “... extravagant grace and love streams out of heaven in a kaleidoscopic blaze of color and illuminates the steps of our pilgrimage.”

And so... we persevere in our faith... with our eyes fixed on Jesus. The life of the ages has begun... and as glorious as it now is... there is an even greater glory yet to come.

All glory be to Jesus Christ now and forevermore.

## Play Jesus – Deep Prayer Music/Meditation Music

### Prayers of the People:

“For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, ‘Do not fear; I will help you.’”

Isaiah 41:13

### Prayers of the People:

“...do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Isaiah 41:10

- children of Kidzone and teachers and helpers
- youth of SYNC and adult leaders

### Prayers of the People:

“...do not be afraid... do not fear, for I myself will help you,” declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One.

Isaiah 41:10



**Prayers of the People:**

“...do not be afraid...  
do not fear,  
for I myself will help you,”  
declares the LORD,  
your Redeemer,  
the Holy One.

Isaiah 41:10

**New program at  
LAU WELNEW Tribal School  
on the Saanich Peninsula**



**Prayers of the People:**

“I will make rivers flow on barren heights...  
I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the  
parched ground into springs.” Isaiah 40:18

O Lord, capture every heart with your love, every habit with your holiness. We ask you to convince the spiritually thirsty that you are the soul-Satisfier. O God, grant repentance and faith to \_\_\_\_\_.  
We ask these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.