



# COVENANT WORD

IMAGINE

REVELATION 21:1-6

*A message by Rev. Dr. Rodney Franklin, Interim Pastor*

*Sunday | May 19, 2019*

It was time for the annual spring trip to the garden store to make all things new with the flower bed in front of the house. The adult garden store can be like the build a bear workshop for kids. Decisions, decisions, decisions! How can I imagine taking the old space to a colorful space and what might that look like with the options before me? Well the limelight hydrangea's were looking luscious, the vinca was looking vibrant, the begonia was looking beautiful, the marigold was looking majestic. But what caught my eye and was on sale, was the grape jolly rancher colored and coral INPATIENTS! They spoke to me and said we would look real nice especially if you put down some Hershey chocolate brown mulch that would enhance the flower bed. Flowers, check, bags of mulch, check, new bags of soil to mix with some of the old soil check. Off to the cashier to ring up the items and on to the house to make the front of the house POP with my garden items to begin the process to transition the flower bed in making all things new.

This is what the text tells us about this morning in Revelation where John the author, is telling us that in the end God will fulfill God's promise and make all things new.

The bible records for us the beginning of the world and the end of the world. The story of human kind from the beginning to the end, from the fall into sin to redemption and God's ultimate victory over evil is found in God's word. One author notes:

Genesis	Revelation
The Sun is created	The sun is not needed
Satan has victory	Satan is defeated
Sin enters the human race	Sin is banished
People run and hide from God	People are invited to live with God
People are cursed	The curse is removed
Tears are shed, with sorrow for sin	

No more sin, no more tears

Paradise is lost

Paradise is regained

People are doomed to death    Death is defeated

Revelation presents the conclusion to God's story of salvation, where evil is defeated, creation is restored and God lives forever among the people. Revelation makes clear that God is in control and will successfully accomplish God's purposes. Revelation is a book of hope, and was written to seven churches in Asia and believers everywhere. John the beloved apostle and eyewitness of Jesus proclaims that the victorious Lord will return to vindicate the righteous and judge the wicked. Revelation is also a book of warning because things were not as they should have been in the churches, so Christ was calling members to commit themselves to live in righteousness.

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purposes.***

It is important to live in righteousness because when you want to live your way and not God's way that can usually get you into trouble. A humorous story was told about a burglar who broke into this house. The broker walked around the house putting the homeowner's item in his bag. From one room to the next he went and then he heard a voice. He thought where did that come from, I am the only one here in the house. He heard the voice again and then it got louder, Jesus is watching you! He walked where he heard the voice and a parrot was in the room and said again, Jesus is watching you. He said, where did you come from and why are you talking? The parrot I live here and my name is Ishmael. Ishmael, what kind of name is that and who named you? The parrot replied the owners of the house named me and named the Rottweiler, Jesus! It is always important

to live God's way and not our way!

The apostle John the author, reminds us that it is an apocalyptic book which talks about the end times with different prophecies and what we note in our text this morning in the 21st chapter is that the earth as we know it will not last forever and after God's judgment, God will create a new earth. God had also promised Isaiah that God would create a new and eternal earth. The sea that is mentioned in John's time was viewed as dangerous. It was also like the source of the beast. We don't know how the new earth will look or where it will be, but God and God's follower's-those whose names are written in the book of life will be united to live there forever. Will you be there? Will your name be on the book of life? The songwriter was right when he asked the question, When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more, and the morning breaks, eternal bright and fair. When the saved of the earth shall gather over on the other shore, and the roll is call up yonder? Will your life's actions prepare you for your name to be on the book of life?

Not only will there be a new heaven and new earth but also a new Jerusalem, where God lives among God's people. Instead of going up to meet God, the word says God comes own to be with us, just as God became man in Jesus Christ and lived among

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us. Wherever God reigns, there is peace, security and love.

Have you ever wondered what eternity will be like? The Holy city Jerusalem is described as the place where God will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no death, pain, sorrow, or crying. This is what we have to look forward to and know that no matter what we are going through it is not the last word-God has writer the final chapter and it is about true fulfillment and eternal joy for those who know and love God. Church that is good news! It makes you want to dream and imagine that the God we serve and the God we know is still speaking!

Can't you imagine our graduates continuing to do great and wonderful things, like:

Imagine Eleanore becoming the president of the University of Alabama...

Imagine Allan becoming the Manager of the Lowe's on Lakeshore...

Imagine Jasmine becoming the president of MTV...

Imagine Cate becoming president of one of the Birmingham High Schools...

Imagine Sarah becoming the editor of the *Birmingham Magazine*...

Imagine John, my new friend becoming a player with the Chicago Bears!

Can you imagine a little boy in our city who was going around town feeding the homeless. He was not more than six years old but the local and national news station found him and his work. He is not in front of the camera asking for a new toy, or phone but asking to create support for those who do not have a home.

Imagine this past Wednesday the 15th of May, the Nakbar, the catastrophe of land taken from Palestinian people being remembered in different ways across the world.

Imagine the legislature in Montgomery deciding to make decisions on behalf of women believing that they have their best interest in mind when they have just voted to ban a woman's right to choose.

Imagine no body shaming or social media bullying!

Imagine no health challenges like cancer, diabetes, or high blood pressure!

Imagine no heavenly UAB hospital, no St. Vincent hospital, no Brookwood Hospital or Princeton Hospital.

Imagine no unarmed police killings, and no border walls.

Imagine everyone respected as a precious child of God regardless of race and gender! This is what John talks about in revelation. God is the creator! The bible

begins with the majestic story of God's creation of the universe and ends with God's creation of a new heaven and a new earth. This is our hope and give encouragement for the followers of God.

We also believe that the church and its role is described in this chapter because God's plan for a new reality is not only done by God. Like in Genesis God is involved in humanity in the person of Abraham and creation is still done in partnership with humanity. Humanity is the summit of God's creation and God calls on believing humanity to be involved in making God's dream come true in the world. The church has to imagine and believe with God for a better world. The church cannot be silent, the church has to participate in the community square and be present and active in doing God's work. Don't you like that about the church, that it has a responsibility to do something, be something, representing something and continue to pass on that legacy of imagining with God to make this world a better place. Amen!