

“Which Comes First?”  
Revelation 21: 1-6  
John 13: 31-35  
May 6, 2007

The Rev. Patrick Day  
First Presbyterian Church  
Lake Forest, Illinois  
The 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

I have a buddy, great guy, I never lived with him but I spent a lot of time at his house. He did not like to answer the phone. That drove me nuts. If there is a phone ringing, I want to pick it up. I turned off that feature on my computer that plays a sound when you get a new e-mail, because if I hear that sound I'm checking. But he would just let the phone go.

I would say, “Aren't you going to get that?”

He'd say, “The machine will get it, it's probably for one of my roommates anyway.”

It would ring again, and again I'd say, “Aren't you going to get that?”

“Nah.”

It drove me crazy.

But it was actually a good thing because I did see what it was like when he answered the phone. “No, he's not here...oh yeah I'll tell him, sure. Yep, I'll give him the message.”

“Hey, who was that?” I'd ask

“I don't know.” he'd reply.

It was much more reliable if it went to voice mail. I even saw him one day, as if in some way to justify this behavior. He was on the phone and he said “Oh yeah, I'm writing it down...yea I got it.”

“Hey, who was that?” I asked

“I don't know,” he answered.

Except I have to give him some credit. If it was really important, if it was something truly important he wrote it down. Because that is what you do, if it is important you write it down. You sit in a class or a meeting, you don't try to get every single word that is said but what do you write down? You write down what's important. Never mind the fact that no one is writing anything right now, but if it's important you write it down. That is why post-it notes were invented. That's what we hear in Revelation.

The one sitting on the throne says that. He says “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and they are true. It is done. I am the alpha and the omega. I am the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. It is done.”

It is done. The picture we get in Revelation, a new Heaven, a new Earth, where death will be no more, tears will be wiped away. There is no “if”, this is it. It is done. This is what will happen; this is what our Lord will create for us. What should we do? We should love one another. That is why we read Revelation first and the gospel second, even though this new creation takes place long after Jesus has said these words to his disciples, it is done. It is not: *if you do this, then I will create this; if you love one another, then I will create a new Heaven and a new Earth.* It goes the other way.

That is the picture of the Lord’s new creation. What should we do? We should love one another. We should love one another not to get some reward; we should love one another because the reward has already been given to us. It is done. Because of that promise, we should love one another.

What does that mean? After all, isn’t it strange that I can use the same word to describe my feelings for the Bears, for buffalo wings, for my children and my Lord: love? If that word gets used in all those different ways, what does it mean when Jesus said to us to love one another? There is the challenge that He tags onto it after that. Love one another as I have loved you.

That gives us a clearer picture, but a more difficult picture. How does Jesus love us? Jesus sacrificed himself for us. Even before the cross, Jesus saw his life as an act of service. That is how he poured out his life for us. Not by placing himself above anyone, but below. That is why the disciples were mortified earlier in the Gospel when He takes out this towel and this basin of water and begins washing their feet. But that is who He was. The love that Jesus has is sacrificial love.

The way Jesus loves us is by forgiving us. Not always an easy thing for us to do. We are to love one another as he loves us. Jesus also understands; he understands the people

that he loves. He knows who we are; He knows what we're like. And we're called to do the same thing.

I have another buddy who didn't get married for a long time. The reason he gave all of us is that he didn't want to settle. He wanted to make sure it was right; he didn't want to just settle for anything. He's now happily married. He's happily married, not because he settled, but because he realized that nobody, including himself is perfect. We all have our flaws and our quirks. Once he understood that, he was able to give himself freely and to truly love somebody else. He never settled, but he understood.

Jesus understands us. Jesus knows who we are, and still loves us. It is done. That promise is sure. We love one another as Jesus loves us. That promise is true for all of us. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. That gift isn't only offered to those who lined up saying they were thirsty. Jesus seeks out the people who are thirsty.

When Jesus met the woman at the well she did not come to him. She did not come to him looking for anything. She came to that well to fill up a bucket. When she arrived Jesus asked her for a drink of water. Then in return, gave her a gift. A gift that was so powerful it changed her life so much that this woman, who had had five husbands; who was living with someone at the time who was not her husband, when back into town and told everybody what she had seen, what she had heard and they believed her. They believed her because she became sure of this promise. They believed her because she knew that after encountering Christ, it is done.

It is done. So love one another. Love one another. Not to get something in return from that other person, not to get something in return from God. We've gotten our reward. It's the picture painted for us in the passage from Revelation. It's done. A new heaven and a new Earth, where our tears will be wiped away, there will be no more death. It's done. So love one another. Love one another as Christ has loved you. Amen.