

Revelation 21:1, 3-4

“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. 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.’”

My brothers and my sisters in Christ Jesus. Well, it's almost here, 2023 is just a few hours away. The turning of the year is a time of hello's isn't? Hello new year. Hello, new me! Hello, new possibilities. Perhaps you've already got things planned for your year of newness. Hello, workout regiment and newly founded confidence. Hello, new skill you're going to master and impress everyone. Hello, soon enough to a newest member of the family. A full year of possibilities. But, in a way saying hello to a new year, to new things and new possibilities, also means we have to say goodbye to others. Goodbye to old me, goodbye to 2022, goodbye to life as it was previously functioning.

And saying goodbye stinks. I don't think I have to elaborate on that to you. Saying farewell, is almost never something that is fun to do unless you're getting rid of some family who have overstayed their welcome during this Christmas season. Saying bye is such a hard thing to do that even the words that we choose are ways of taking some of the sting away of leaving. We say 'goodbye' to wish someone well on their path. We say 'Farewell' to give some sort of best wishes at a parting. We even say 'until we meet again!' or 'see you later!' as a way of masking the pain that can come from parting ways with someone we hold so dear. We avoid doing it, or try not to think about it at all because the separation is a little too uncomfortable.

And you probably not have thought about it this way before. Perhaps you have never even considered it. But the sting of saying 'goodbye' is purely a result of sin. When you look at Genesis chapter 3, we see that painful and well known story of the fall into sin. The serpent tempted Adam and Eve, and they fell prey to his sinister lies. The fruit that was pleasing to the eye did not bring about the pleasing life they were told. They both took that fruit and brought about a curse that lies on this earth to this very day. They cursed it in a weird way, with goodbyes.

The verses after the temptation, tell of how much Adam and Eve are forced to say goodbye to because of sin. They are banished from the garden of Eden. Goodbye Garden. Eve would now bear a child with great difficulty. Farewell painless childbearing. There is going to be tension between you. See ya to totally perfect marriages. Now there's work and weeds, thorns and thistles. See you never easy food. And perhaps the most gut wrenching thing. Both of them are going to die. Goodbye immortality.

Sin not only invented goodbyes so to speak, but it also makes them very difficult.. Because all of a sudden, after this moment, every day that Adam lived, was one day less. Every they eat something from the ground means that they say goodbye to that time and that energy. Now after this critical moment, there comes the words, and yes the promise that you will die. There will come a time where you will say a final goodbye to a loved one and have to bury them. There will come a time where you will say your final goodbye and be buried. Their world which used to have unlimited time, unlimited food, unlimited ability for fulfillment, now comes with price, sacrifice and goodbyes.

This world that Adam and Eve now knew so painfully well, is the same one that you and I know. And I think as we have come to the end of a year on a calendar, you understand the painful goodbyes the things that you have had to say goodbye to this year. In 2022, you have had to say goodbye to possessions, ones that might have even been dear to you. In 2022, you have had to say goodbye to a year of your own life, one that can never be redone, changed, or picked up on again. In 2022, you might have had to say goodbye to people, friends who have moved away, family who no longer speak to you, loved ones whom have been buried in the earth from which them came.

In every sermon this year, you have heard your pastors speak about this. In one form or another, you have heard us preach to you about sin in every single message. Speaking about how the sins of our minds, the sins of our hands, the sins of our hearts. Speaking about the sinfulness of this world in which we live. Preaching about the consequences of that sin. Whether it be in difficulties of life, spiritual harm to our souls, tensions and fights among people we know. We have preached to your hearts about a lot of sin tainted goodbyes.

But every single sermon this year, we have preached about another goodbye. A goodbye that all of us are not dreading, but a goodbye we can't wait to utter. A farwell which was spoken of in our second text in Revelation 21. When we say our goodbyes to goodbyes.

John, in the last book of the Bible shows us a picture of another place which we will call ours. It is the new Jerusalem, the Holy City. A place that has been crafted and prepared for our eternal home. And that is heaven.

It is a place so serene, so beautiful, so full of goodbyes. Heaven is a place where we all see the earth pass away with all it's deformities. You will say Goodbye forever sinful earth. It is a place where there is nothing that goes wrong. The things there, never rust, never decay, never disintegrate. The people in that heavenly glory, never grow old, never need to go to the hospital, never need to be buried. You will shout Goodbye forever death. There will be no more kinked necks, painful arguments, lonely nights, worries, or stress. You can say goodbye forever pain, and mourning, and crying. For the old order of things has passed away.

Heaven is a place where we leave this world of sin behind. No more compromises. No more price. No more painful goodbyes. Every day that we spend there is not one day less. Every time you see someone doesn't mean it is one less time you ever will. Every experience does not mean one less.

This place that is so beautiful, so peaceful, so perfect has been given as a gift to each and every one of you. It comes only through the merit and the sacrifice of one man who we have heard about in every Sunday this year. The final goodbye to the sinful and painful earth, was given to us by Jesus. Jesus your Savior, walked among us on this sin filled earth. He suffered his own temptations, wept his own tears, suffered the pain that comes with goodbyes, to win for you that heaven where you can say good bye to goodbyes.

Over the past year, we hope that we have proclaimed these truths to you faithfully and in their full beauty. The absolute wonder of an eternal life achieved by God on our behalf. The wonderful story of the baby in the manger on Christmas, the somber suffering of his passion on good Friday, and the glorious victory cry on Easter morning.

Saying goodbye still stinks. There were still some painful goodbyes that all of you have had to say this year, as this night we say goodbye to 2022. But I pray that this sermon takes a little bit of the sting away from it. Because while goodbyes are painful here, there will come a day, by the Grace of God, that we will say goodbye to goodbyes. God bless you and keep that message on your hearts forever. Amen.