

Revelation 21:1-6

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

‘See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.’

And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ Then he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

Do you thirst?

For thousands of years, the notion of eternal life has fascinated us. We just observed Halloween, which really is about the continuity of life after death, whether it be as ghosts or ghouls like vampires or Frankenstein monsters constructed from parts of dead people and brought to life by mad scientists, or mummies, those Egyptian kings who were embalmed and buried with their treasures by people who entertained the idea that they might enjoy some kind of life within their tombs. But not all depictions of life eternal are so grotesque; do you remember Ponce de Leon, the Spanish explorer who according to legend travelled through the Bahamas and up into Florida in search of the Fountain of Youth? The legend of such a fountain or “pool” of you can be traced as far back as the fifth century B.C. and the Greek writer Herodotus. We continue to be fascinated today as we follow science that seeks to slow or even reverse the aging process.

Which leads me to wonder: if science makes some sort of breakthrough that would enable people to live forever, would the Christian faith survive? I believe that there are a lot of Christians who are Christians because Jesus rose from the dead. That prospect is quite appealing to the average person, and I’m sure there are a lot of “believers” who believe because the reward for such belief is eternal life.

And I don’t doubt that there is life after death.

But I think that Jesus came to bring us more than a promise of life after death; I believe that Jesus came to show us what our life in the here and now should look like. There are a lot of people who don’t know how to live their lives as God intended them to live them. And when we think about those “saints” who we recognize and memorialize

today, we can probably identify something that they all have in common; they lived their lives in ways that not only pleased God; they pleased US! That's why we remember them and honor them today. There are people we don't honor today, either because their lives made no impression upon us or anyone, or because they have left us with wounds and scars that are slow to heal. But the people we honor today are people who are in some way or another like Jesus. It's amazing to me how Jesus, a poor Jewish carpenter who only lived to be 33 years old is, I believe, the most remembered person in all of history. If you are a person of faith you have a relationship with the living Jesus, but even those people without faith strive to know who the historical Jesus really was, because during his lifetime before his resurrection he left such a mark on this world! We recently finished a book study on the Gnostic gospels which were ancient writings that were not included in our present Bible but told wonderful stories of Jesus, Jesus both before and after the resurrection.

So whether people believe in the resurrection or not, they still remember Jesus as a great guy – a healer, a teacher, a social reformer, and a visionary. And as we pause today to remember the saints in our life, we have to acknowledge that in one way or another those saints remind us of Jesus because of the way they lived their lives in the here and now, not in the hereafter. They may have healed us in some spiritual way. They may have taught us some valuable lessons explicitly or implicitly. They might have inspired us for their devotion to justice and the way they lived the way that they hoped everyone would someday live – a way that transcended the selfishness and the indifference that so often characterize the behaviors and attitudes of people.

And our faith in Christ's resurrection is the same faith that tells us that those saints that we honor today are sharing eternity with Jesus. None of us witnessed the resurrection of Jesus, and it would be easy for us as rational beings to doubt that Jesus ever rose from the dead. I don't think there will ever be a way for Christians to "prove" that Jesus rose from the grave; that's why we call our faith "faith." Our faith comes from within our hearts, and our hearts tell us that those who live in God live in Christ, and those who live in Christ, though they may experience death will also rise to life as Christ rose to life.

Our faith can never be proved, because if it could it wouldn't be faith. But our faith comes from God who is eternal, and our spirits thirst for that God. And because they thirst and because that God is both eternal and loving, that God does not disappoint us. That God assures us that where Christ is, we will be also. And as we gain assurance of that eternal life, we lose our fear of death, and when we lose that fear we learn how to truly live our lives to God's glory, as all those saints that we recognize now learned to live in ways that so impressed us. May we live our lives as those who know that our lives are eternal in Christ. And may we someday dwell with him and the many saints who have gone before us into the realm of the Eternal.