

“The Air Is Humming”

May 22, 2022

Revelation Song series

I have a question for you this morning. How many of you are watching less television news than you used to watch? It's pretty hard to watch, isn't it? So depressing. Well, when you and I consider these last two and a half years that we have survived in this country, it is no surprise that this weariness, this being overcome by feelings of depression over the state of things, can become overwhelming. You've heard the statistics, I'm sure. Americans are reporting high rates of anxiety. Suicides and gun violence have markedly increased. If you've driven the highways around here, you can attest to the fact that road rage is at an all-time high. And as I reported at the Bishop Peter Storey Event here a couple of weeks ago, the New England College of Medicine reports, for the first time ever, that the leading cause of mortality among children now is gun violence.

We have been living, certainly, with at least four major events these past two-and-one-half years that have dramatically changed our lives, our churches, and even the history of this country. Here are a few images, just a few, to make the point. First, and still pervasive, the pandemic of Covid 19. Over 1,000,000 Americans have died from Covid. How many of you know of someone who lost their life to Covid? Or who has long-term disabling repercussions from the virus? Our schools were closed. Our restaurants and many businesses shut down. Needed surgeries were postponed because there were no hospital beds. And shockingly, this very virus has caused a huge political divide across this country, as political parties chose sides over whether people should become vaccinated or not! That terrible rendering, that tearing apart of the very tapestry of our nation has affected all of us, including our government today, and even our extended families at dinner time.

If that isn't enough, next came the presidential election, and with it, January 6th and the storming of the Capitol, from followers of the former President who spoke loudly that the election was stolen. Most of us watched and wondered how such a thing could be happening in this democracy of ours, ruled by laws and a representative government. The violence of it was shocking and horrifying, in a land already overwhelmed by Covid. The repercussions of that January 6th violence are still being felt today, as the investigation continues, with over 1000 people interviewed, and the fierce division among our people grows even deeper today.

But that's not all we have had to deal with, is it. How about the protests? Black lives matter, where our citizens of color came to the streets to protest police brutality. And our LGBTQIA citizens came out to say we matter too. And then we began to hear that those police who guard our safety and keep the peace are now being targeted, and ambushed. Dear Jesus.

We can hardly bear to turn on the news, can we. Every day. Something awful. And we take our sides and shout angrily at one another across the divide. We no longer listen to each other.

And if that were not enough, the fourth big horrible news flash. The war comes to Ukraine. I hate to say it, but perhaps we didn't feel other wars, other suffering quite as keenly as this war, because these victims here look so much like us. Sometimes we don't connect, I hate to say it, with the suffering of people who are so obviously of different cultures and races than we are. But with Ukrainians, we can relate now to how war in our own streets might look. We have seen the horror of their normal lives ending, in one bomb minute, and their cities turned to rubble, and their frightened, lost children. And behind it all we also know the huge threat looming... of a possible nuclear war between our country and Russia.

Enough already? Is it any wonder we're in chaos? Is it any wonder that we turn off the darn news, and even drop the masks when Covid is making a return? We're saying I can't do this, I'm going to turn my face away, it's too much. Everything's terrible. There's nothing I can do, anyway. Let's just forget about it all!

Oh, how we need a revelation. We need hope, don't we? We are not the only people who have faced hard times in history. Granted, the people of the time of the writing of Revelation did not face nuclear weapons or Covid, but they faced the Romans. John wrote against the backdrop of the persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire. Christians were hunted down by the Romans because of their faith. And when Christians were caught, some of them were wrapped in animal skins, and thrown into the arena with the lions and hyenas to be devoured while the Romans cheered the sport. Or they were found in their hiding places and then crucified on crosses along the roadways.

So, it is to them, and to us, that John of Patmos wrote his vision of the New Jerusalem that is coming, the city whose light is the glory of God... a city whose nations will be healed and whose gates will never be shut. And the water of life will flow from the thrones of God, and of the Lamb Jesus, the water becoming a river that waters the trees of life. And no longer will there be any curse. Or anything

impure in the New Jerusalem. And the Lord God will give his servants everlasting light as they serve him. And they will reign for ever and ever.

It is a vision of eternal hope that John gave to us. This is the vision the early Christians carried with them, often to their deaths. They kept their faith, they supported each other, hid in caves, shared communion and baptism, and followed in the ways of Jesus. Serving one another. Sharing their faith. Believing that one day the experience of the New Jerusalem would be theirs.

We need this vision, don't we? The book of Proverbs says it well: without a vision, the people perish. And the vision that comes from Revelation is a vision of hope, and assurance, that not only will God one day wipe away every tear from our eyes, but you and I will also be there with God in a place that is beautiful beyond all human words, seen by John as the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, with its crystal healing waters, its healing trees of life, and God's eternal light.

So often songs come to me when I'm thinking about the things of God... and this one came, from West Side Story, of all things! "Could it be? Yes, it could. Something's coming. Something good! If I can wait. I've got a feeling there's a miracle due, gonna come true, coming to me.... The air is humming, and something great is coming."

We as Christians live with Resurrection expectations. We believe that there is more to come following our brief years on this earth. John of Patmos tries to describe his vision with words that cannot describe the glory of what God has prepared for you and for me. The air is humming, and something great is coming.

And we have to trust in that as we work together here, following Jesus, during this chaotic, scary, crazy, tumultuous in history. Let's face it. We may not be thrown to the lions, brothers and sisters, but we are going to be called to show up and take a stand as Christian Americans. Bishop Storey, when he was here, said it is important for all of us to decide whether we were going to be American Christians, or Christian Americans. Will our country, or our political party, have our first allegiance, or will Jesus have our first allegiance? Will we be the peacemakers, following him, in a country that is so torn apart and at each other's throats? Can we work on healing relationships, in the name of Jesus? Can you and I stand up to the powers of government in Jesus' name when injustice is being done? There may not be any lions or hyenas, but in these times of dangers, more than ever, Jesus is calling you and me, through the tumult, to be brave, and courageous, and to follow him. To make a difference. To heal this land.

Brothers and sisters, that little band of Christians kept at it, long ago. They didn't quit. And because of them, here we are. Who knows what we can do! The air is humming.

I invite you now into a time of prayer: and when I say the words "Lord in Your mercy, if you wish, reply **Hear our prayer**":

Loving God, Like the early Christians, we have experienced the need for your care and provision. We too have known your love. You invite us to extend that love to the world around us, to care for others as deeply as we care for ourselves. And so we bring the needs of the world, especially of Ukraine and other countries at war, before you. LORD IN YOUR MERCY...

We pray for the many who do not have enough: enough food to eat, or enough shelter, enough employment, or money to pay their bills; enough medicine or medical care. LORD IN YOUR MERCY....

We also pray for those who have more than enough, but who still struggle to find meaning and purpose in life; who indulge in dangerous or self-serving activities to dull their pain or loneliness. LORD IN YOUR MERCY....

Loving God, Your grace reaches out to all of us. You call us to live as citizens of heaven, working together with one heart and mind. Strengthen us to live in a manner worthy of the Good News we have received, offering our lives in service of your kingdom, where the last are first, and the first are last. LORD IN YOUR MERCY...

In the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us these words to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by your name. Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen