

Prayer of the Week:

Let your merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of your humble servants; and, that we may receive what we ask, teach us by your Holy Spirit to ask only those things that are pleasing to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the same Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, Proper Ten)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.



Holy - Week Six

**Rev. 21:1-5 (NRSV)
Rev. 21:22-22:2 (NRSV)**

July 12th, 2020

Recap

Holy means unique and set apart. God's

Two visions in the Old Testament anchor our understanding of holiness:

First, the holiness cleanses impurity. This is first seen in Isaiah's temple vision and then embodied in Jesus who spends his life and ministry touching impure people bringing restoration, healing, and wholeness.

Second, it is in God's nature to go out. This is first seen in Ezekiel's vision of a life-giving river flowing out of the temple. This reality is to be embodied by the Church who is called to go out into the world to bring the healing news of Jesus Christ.

Holiness is not so much about personal morality (although it includes that); it is primarily about being transformed by God and then bringing the good news of God to bear on the world around us.

The final two chapters of the Bible are a tour of the Holy City of God.

Temple

First, notice the absence of the temple. The temple was the dwelling place of God's presence and the center of life, worship, art, and culture.

What could a temple-less city possibly mean? The holy presence of God fills all the universe where Jesus sits on the throne as Ruler over all the Nations.

Notice also that there is no sun or moon. What point is trying to be made through a moonless and sunless city? That God himself illuminates our way. He is the light we are to follow!

In the vision, the temple, sun, and moon are stripped away to point us to a reality where Jesus' presence fills the earth as he sits as Ruler of the Nations and the light of His presence illuminates our way.

These are the very realities to which the Church has been called to bear witness. In this final vision, those realities are made clear for all to see!

River of Life

The river of life flows from the throne through the middle of the city. On its shores is the tree of life that bears fruit continually.

The movement of this life-giving river points us to the reality that the holy and healing presence of God is dynamic, not static.

Holiness is not a state you reach, it is a life you enter into.

Twice in the closing chapters of the Bible there is an invitation to drink from the life-giving water "without cost." (21:6 & 22:17) Why emphasize that this life-giving water costs nothing?

"For people to whom even the cost of water is unaffordable, the fact that God gives the water of life without payment comes as good news. As a healing contrast to the exploitive economy of Babylon, New Jerusalem offers a gift economy in which water and other essentials of life are given 'without cost.'" -Barbara Rossing, The Rapture Exposed

Tree of Life

Along the bank of the river is the Tree of Life. Amazingly, this tree bears a different fruit each month. It is in a continual cycle of fruit-bearing.

In New Jerusalem, there is food for everyone and no one goes hungry.

"The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." (vs. 22:2)

The invitation of Revelation is to lay the healing leaves of the Tree of Life onto every wound we carry, whether physical or spiritual. What wounds do you carry that need healing?

Our tour of the heavenly city began with the One seated on the throne saying, "I am making all things new." That statement is in the present active (am making), not anticipation (I will) or retrospective (I have). The vision unveils what is most true about the world: the One who sits on the throne is making all things new. Amen!