



November 5, 2006

Preaching: Rev. Ronni Verboom

Psalm 24

Revelation 21:1-6a

“Making all things new”

The Stewardship team recently invited us to estimate our giving to the church for 2007. A form was mailed out, with a request to return it by Nov. 5. That’s today! We will continue to receive forms with gratitude, but the sooner you turn yours in, the more helpful it is for the church leadership! Additional forms are available by the small pump on the table outside the church office.

The story of “Desert Pete” helps us reflect on giving. A pump stands in a remote part of the desert—ready to refresh and sustain parched travelers who pass by. But simply pumping the handle, no matter how vigorously, is an exercise in futility. A man named “Pete” left a note attached to the pump explaining why. “This here pump needs to be primed,” his note cautions. A bottle of water is buried nearby. “But don’t drink any of that water!” the note warns. There is only enough to PRIME THE PUMP. All the water needs to be poured into the pump, THEN hearty effort will bring up all the fresh water you need. “And don’t forget to fill the bottle for the next feller!” concludes the note, signed “Desert Pete”.

This is a great day to praise and thank God for the saints of the past. Today we celebrate All Saints Sunday. In the United Methodist Church the “saints” are all those who love and serve Christ—past, present and future. In the mystery of God’s ways we are all ONE. Today we are especially grateful for those who came before us--- for the jar of water they left us. As we prime the pump with the water they provided, we experience the presence and call of Christ here in St. Charles in the fall of 2006.

Our church has a long history- with beginnings in St. Charles before the Civil War! Our bulletin cover depicts buildings used by the congregation through the years. The current building was a GIFT from Colonel Edward Baker in memory of his parents, Martha and Edward Baker. All of this is “water in the jar” so we can drink in the message of Christ’s love and transforming power TODAY.

Friends, others in the past did the things that make today possible. One simple example of this is our drinking glasses. These were part of Colonel Baker's gift. He donated all the FURNISHINGS for our ministries, as well as the building. We are still drinking from the glasses he gave us, every week at our Wednesday night suppers! Those who came before us not only left "water in a jar" for priming the pump—they even left us the glasses to drink with!

Others in the past did the things that made today possible, SO THAT we can now do the things that will make tomorrow possible.

God did not work through the saints of the past just to give us water to drink up till it's gone.

The Psalm read today proclaims "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it." We are here NOT TO PLEASE OURSELVES, but to SERVE our Lord, the King of Glory, the One to whom the whole UNIVERSE belongs. We are here to bring the message of Christ's love and redemption to the world- and to future generations.

The book of Revelation presents us with the vision of where all this is headed. Today's text teaches us that God doesn't remain in one place, in the past. God is MAKING ALL THINGS NEW. He calls us to be his agents in making all things new- as we prime the pump for the future, rather than just drinking the water in the jar from the past.

The words from Revelation tell us about God's activity in symbolic language and images. God is acting to bring about a new reality- a new JERUSALEM, a new city.

Many aspects of God's will can be seen here. God is already working on them! God is wiping tears and easing pain. God is overcoming the power of death in the world- all kinds of death. The image of what God's after is a CITY—not a charming pasture or a beautiful clearing in the woods. A city is what God wants, where people are gathered in peace and love and God himself lives among them.

God wants to bring us together with all people. We're to be co-workers with him. One thing that needs to be made new is US. WE need to be changed. David Buttrick stresses the importance of this step in the process: "***For what's the use of a utopian dream if we are stuck with the same old men and women?... Unless we can be changed we'll dream a Holy City but end with death and pain and a warring of nations, every time. "A new heaven and a new earth"? My God! What we need is nothing less than a whole human race.***"

Friends, I am dreaming of some new things. I am dreaming of some ways we might be new, changed people.

In 2007, our Evangelism team will produce some new advertisements. We're hoping to reach people in our community who might not think "church" is for them. These are different than anything we've ever done before—truly something new. We'll pass out some examples before you leave today. We'd love to hear your ideas of how, when and where to get these ads in front of people.

I am dreaming that those ads WILL bring us new people- even new KINDS of people. I am dreaming that God will change US so that we make room for new folks, with new wisdom and skills for welcome and reaching out.

I am dreaming we will become more generous with our time, our friendship, our building space, our financial support of what Jesus is doing in our midst.

I am wondering and dreaming about what God has in store for us, the people of Baker Memorial United Methodist Church, as we join together in the movement of God's people following Christ into the world.

Look at the buildings printed on your bulletin cover. These were staging areas for the outreaching love of God made known in Jesus Christ. That's what our building is for us today--- a staging area for ministry. Someday, that last box will be filled in—what will be pictured there? What will be the ways and places we reach out towards future generations?

We thank God for the saints that filled the bottle of water for us. We have received much. Now, let's pray God makes us willing and able to keep that water flowing. May we be DETERMINED to leave the jar FULL of water for those who come behind us.

Make no mistake—Jesus is counting on us to be his agents, helping as he makes all things new!

(Pass out new ads, encouraging people to give them to neighbors, friends, co-workers, family members---invite them to church!)