

Revelation & The Wizard of Oz

March 31, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is called "Revelation and the Wizard of Oz." The scripture reading is Revelation 5, 1-5. Thank you to Glynnis, Jon, Dave, and Don for being part of the video. Happy birthday this week to John, Jenny, and Anne.

Welcome, Announcements & Prayer

Good morning, everyone. Good to see everyone. Good to see our friends from Great Lakes as well. And happy St. Patrick's Day. Wear my green. I was telling Helen and, oh dear, to Marcy. Sorry. Yeah, I can remember that I'm Irish, but I can't remember your name. That my mother's maiden name was Ireland, so there you go. There's a little Irish in me.

And this, ding ding. So, I'm kind of fresh back from a trip to Houston to celebrate Peggy, Val's eldest daughter Peggy, her 70th birthday. She seriously, seriously looks like she's 50. Like what an amazing woman. It was so much fun. But I have to say, as wonderful as it was, we got to see Lindsay and the baby, and they're both doing well, as wonderful as it was to get away, truly there is no place like home.

Wednesdays at seven, starting April 3rd, Paul will be leading a class called When Anxiety Overwhelms. And I know that that's a very apropos topic for these days and the ones to come. We'll sing some songs by request and spend some time in prayer, Bible study, and discussion.

We also have a few prayer requests. Pam has moved to Shaver for rehab and very intense physiotherapy. She asked that you give her a call because the physiotherapy really is very intense. And so, if you'd give her a call before you visit, she would love to have you come. Marie has moved to Shalom Manor and she's recovering from a stroke.

And we continue to pray for Mary's family as they mourn her passing. Alice sends her thanks for kind thoughts and flowers, and your support at this sad time is greatly appreciated. And I can certainly vouch for that when we have to live through the passing or a change in health. There's nothing like the support of people in prayer. Let's go ahead and pray for these people.

Dearest Lord God, we ask your special prayer, or we pray to you, especially for Pam and for Marie and for Mary's family. God, please help them to deal with the difficulties that are inevitable in life but are still great burdens to bear. God, we know that you are sovereign overall and that you walk beside us through everything. And God, we need your strength. We know that the wings of your spirit surround us, and we pray that especially for people that are struggling, God, that you would wrap your wings around them and hold them close to your heart, knowing of course that you do anyway. God, we love you. We thank you. We are so grateful that we have this beautiful world to live in, God, that's filled with your majesty. God, we love you. We thank you. We pray for our service today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Communion

On Gloria and my 25th anniversary, we went way down into the Finger Lakes area, and we went to a place called Elmira, New York. We took this little trolley car that took us for scenic tour of the area, but we ended up in a graveyard, if you could believe this, but who was there? Samuel Clemens. Anybody know who that was? Mark Twain. But there was his family buried there in a big monument. It was really nice. Just kind of made you really think about the man because I've read some of his stuff. So, this week we were at the library, and we had a documentary about his life. So, we picked it up and sat and watched it. It was fascinating. The man started in poverty, became one of the wealthiest men in the world, lost that, and got it back again. One thing that stood out for me was his attitude toward God.

He believed in God, but only that God was out to get us. That was basically his thoughts. Everything in the world that was wrong, God was just trying to punish somebody or get even with them for whatever they did. I thought, "Well, that's kind of sad, actually." The man as smart as him, I just wish he had taken up his New Testament and gave it a read. I don't think he ever read it, but just his attitude overall about God was, "Nah, God's not very nice at all." So, I got thinking about that and I thought, "Well, what's our attitude toward God? All this stuff going on in this world today, are we looking at God to say, "Why? He didn't do it. He didn't do it." Satan does the work and God gets the discredit for it. So, I just thought something.

Matthew 11, verse 25, this is Jesus. This is who we want to worship and honor and magnify. At that time, Jesus declared, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes. Yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom he chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all you who are labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Poor Samuel Clemens, if he had just read that, come unto him, and he would have found rest for his soul.

Then I read over in Matthew, chapter 12, beginning in verse 46. While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hands toward the disciples, he said, "Here are my brothers and my mother, for whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

That's pretty amazing, isn't it? He would look at us and say, "You guys are my brothers, my sisters." And that's so comforting compared to just blaming God for everything. And I got thinking about that, and I thought, well, that's a good thought for us around the table, to realize that we are Jesus' brothers and sisters, that we come here, and we lay our burdens before him, and he will give us rest. And that's just truly, truly amazing. So, no matter what the world deals us, it's okay. God's in charge. God will take care of us. Let's go to him in prayer.

Father, we thank you so much for your love upon us, for the salvation that has been revealed to us. We thank you for allowing us to have the wisdom to accept it, to live it, to be thankful for it. Father, Jesus gave his life on the cross of Calvary. He took upon himself and his body all of our sins, and

he shed his blood so that his blood will continue to cleanse us of our sins. And we just have to submit to him and live our life according to your will through him. We thank you, Father, for everything. Pray your blessing upon the cup at this time and the loaf, for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Reading

Revelation 5:1-5

The reading this morning is from Revelation, Chapter 5, verses 1 through 5. Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or to look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. See the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." [music]

Sermon

Revelation & The Wizard of Oz

Good morning, everybody. Thank you very much today for being with us. I know it's kind of a strange title. It is. Revelation and the Wizard of Oz. When you read the book of Revelation, you think you are in the Wizard of Oz in many cases because it creates this theme of different pictures.

So, what I want to spend some time today talking about this, how many remember the movie The Wizard of Oz? When I was a child, it frightened me to no end, especially The Wicked Witch. But then after the years go on, I've learned so much from this particular movie. And so, I want, I think for the first time in my 46 years of preaching, I've never talked about this, but I want to share a couple of thoughts that I have and I'm sure it'll be a very brief sermon today. But you remember, if you watch The Wizard of Oz, that Dorothy falls into a dream. Now, she lives in rural Kansas. There's a wicked storm that comes up and her farm hands become part of the story. There is a scarecrow straw man. There is a tin man and there is a cowardly lion. And Dorothy, in her dream, though she thinks everything is very real, and maybe you've had sometimes a nightmare and you're so glad that you woke up from what you were experiencing, in her dream, she thinks that everything is very, very real. And she's caught up in this tornado and lands on the planet of Oz. And there she meets all kinds of characters. She and her friends are on her way to Oz because she believes The Wizard of Oz can get her back home. And so, her scarecrow straw man, her tin man and cowardly lion walk together toward trying to find this wizard. Then a beautiful angel tells The Wizard of Oz that she can get Dorothy home.

Once she gets home, all will be well and all will be good. A wicked witch continually tries to stop that from happening. Dorothy and her dog Toto and the wicked witch thinks that she can destroy Dorothy and her friends. But the wicked witch is destroyed by a pail of water. It just takes a pail of water to be destroyed. The witch cries out these words and I wonder someday if Satan will say these words, "You have destroyed my beautiful wickedness." One day there will be no more wickedness. It's like in the beginning. In the beginning God created and after every time he

created, what did he say? It is good. At the end of Revelation, you get this picture of it was difficult. There were struggles. There were horrendous situations. But it's going to be good.

It's interesting how all this takes place. In Revelation it's difficult to grasp and it connects also with the book of Hebrews with many Christians who are trying to love God with all of their heart, soul, mind and strength and follow Jesus and yet being persecuted all of the time. So, I just want to share a couple of scriptures today that I found fascinating.

In Hebrews chapter 11 beginning in verse 32 many Christians were being persecuted simply because of their faith and here's what the Hebrew writer says, and by the way no one knows who wrote the book of Hebrews. For many years it was attributed to the apostle Paul, but most scholars say no, it doesn't sound like him. They really don't know who writes this book of Hebrews. And here's what he says in Hebrews chapter 11 starting in 32.

And what more shall I say? I don't have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice and gained what was promised, who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames and escaped the edge of the sword whose weakness was turned to strength and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. That will happen for us. Others were tortured and they refused to be released so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers, flogging while still others were chained and put in prison as Paul was so often. They were stoned, they were sodden too, sorry, they were put to death by the sword, they went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, mistreated and there's a pause, not in the Bible but in my mind there is a pause. Then it says this, "The world was not worthy of them. They graciously gave their lives so that faith could continue on by others. They wandered in deserts and mountains, sometimes even living in holes in the ground, can you imagine? But they were all commended for their faith. None of them received what they had been promised. God had planned something better for, who do you think? Us.

They had to put up with horrendous, horrendous situations. One morning wake up, mom and dad are gone and they're never coming back. Loved ones being persecuted and being wiped out but they did it for us. Who do we live for? Do we live just for ourselves, or do we live for others as well? We want to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength but we want to be living demonstrations of that, don't we? To the best of our ability and when we mess up, we mess up and we fess up and it's all okay, we'll start again. But here are these people. We don't know who writes this book but somehow, I believe that the writer was part of all of this, being involved in all kinds of difficulties. If God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would we be made perfect. In other words, that we're doing the will of God. So, the Hebrew writer just is fascinating.

In chapter 12, 22, because some of the things that I've said isn't necessarily wonderful, it can be very difficult. However, listen to what he says, "But you have come to Mount Zion." Well, he's talking to people that aren't there yet. You have come to Mount Zion. So, I'm going to say, "Well, where is Mount Zion?" Mount Zion is God himself. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, heaven if you will. But you have come. Wait a minute, I'm not there yet. Oh yeah, you're there. You're on your way. You may not know it. You may not know it, but you're going to wake up someday in this wow. You have come to Mount Zion. You have come to the heavenly Jerusalem.

You have come to the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven.

Your name is there. They know you. I don't know what's going to happen. I just have this idea that one day when we close our eyes and then we open our eyes, we're on the other side and we feel more at home than we've ever felt. Jesus, can I have a conversation with you? Sure, I got all kinds of time. God, can we just talk a little bit? Sure, we can talk all you want. Mom and dad, it's so great to see you. Grandma and Grandpa, it's so wonderful to be here with you. I don't know what it's all about, but I sure don't want to throw it away or think that it's not true because the Hebrew writer, whoever writes this says, no, no, no, it's not just a thought. It is a reality. You have come. You have a reservation. You have come.

And so, he says, see to it that you don't refuse him who speaks. If they do not escape when they refused who warned them on the earth, how much less will we if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven and that the time his voice shook on the earth. But now he has promised. Now he has promised once more, I will shake the only the earth, but also the heavens. The world's once more indicate the removing of what can be shaken that has created things so that can't be shaken. Therefore, here's the word he says, we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

It's ours. We have received it. It can't be shaken. And because of that, let us be thankful. And so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire. We will experience not just read the words, we will experience this great relationship. We'll see loved ones again, a new heaven and a new earth. So, when we get to the book of Revelation, yes, it can be very difficult to grasp. Apocalyptic writing and so forth can be very, very difficult. But there are some interesting scriptures that I want to share. In Revelation chapter three, beginning in verse 20 is an interesting concept. Revelation three beginning in verse 20. If I can find that here, am I? Oh, yes. Here he stands to him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on the throne. I was thinking about that for a long, long time.

God gives us the right to cozy up to him. One day God's giving us the right to sit beside him. God's going to give us the right to say, no, don't worry about time, Don or whoever. Don't worry about it. When I are just going to spend the day together, we're just going to talk. We're just going to share. We're just going to be together. I don't know what that's all like, but the Bible gives us this feeling of absolute intimacy with God, spiritual intimacy, learning about it all. I think that when we see God, here's what we're going to say. I get it now. I get it. I get it now. I didn't really get it altogether. I get it now that it's just a reality. For those who really have no part of it, God has always been inviting them to come and be part of this wonderful kingdom.

In chapter five in Revelation, beginning in verse six, it says this, if you ever feel like you're not quite there, actually I'm going to start in verse nine. They sang this new song, "You are worthy. You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals. Because you were slain with your blood, you purchased men and women for God from every tribe, every language, every people, any nation." Listen. "You have made them," meaning us, "to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God." Listen. "And we will reign on the earth forever."

The beautiful words of Jesus coming to share with us. And then in chapter 12 in Revelation, if you're following, Revelation 12, verses 10 and 11, says this, "Then I heard a loud voice in heaven

say, Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser, Satan, of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night," listen, "has been hurled down and they," us, "we overcame him by the blood of the Lamb," Jesus, "the word of their testimony," what we're reading right now, "and we do not love our lives so much even to shrink from death." And I think most of us feel that way. If we had to, to save someone else, absolutely. "For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives even to the point of death." But it's not over.

In chapter 19, and we'll start wrapping up, in chapter 19, there are these beautiful pictures. It's interesting, there's a word that's being used here. The word hallelujah is mentioned numerous times. I'll make a comment after I finish reading this. If you're following, it's in Hebrews, Revelation, rather, chapter 19. And just grab this in your thoughts if you can. "After all of this, I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned that great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged of her blood of his servants." And again, they shouted, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever. The 24 elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne." And they cried, "Amen! Hallelujah!" Then a voice came from the throne saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, all who revere him, both small and great. Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters, like a loud peals of thunder, shouting, "Hallelujah!" For our Lord God, Almighty reigns, let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory, for the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen and bright and clean was given her to wear. Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of all Christians. Then the angel said to me, "Write this down. Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb."

And I just want you to know that you are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb. You are. Never forget. Never forget. God's invitation is yours, and it's powerful in so many ways. It's interesting. One, two, three, four. Four times the word "Hallelujah" is used in the book of Revelation. Guess how many times the word "Hallelujah" is used in the Bible? Four times. That's it. I thought "Hallelujah" was all over the Bible. Four times. But do you know why I think so?

I want to go back to Genesis. God creates. After His creation, I don't think He says "Hallelujah." I think He says, "Wow. Out of nothing, you made everything." Wow. And at the end of the Bible, when we're standing in God's presence, I think we say the same thing. Wow. And it's all for us. And listen, this is not fairy tale stuff. It is the reality of God. He writes this down. Jesus pens many of these words because God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit is all part of this. So may I just read in conclusion, in Revelation chapter 21, the experience that all of us will have.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth coming together as one. For the first heaven and the first earth passed away. And there was no longer any sea. I think that meant danger. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men and women, and He will live with them. They will be His people. We will be His people. And God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes." And then

these great words, "There will be no more death." Never again, or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the old order of things is gone. Passed away. He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new." And if God is saying, "I am making everything new," if He's saying that, then we are going to see everything being made new. It's not fairy tale. It is our reality. So, He says, "It's done. I'm the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega. To Him who is thirsty, and I hope you're thirsty, thirsty for Jesus, thirsty for God, thirsty for the Spirit, thirsty to see your loved ones again, I will give you drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. And He who overcomes all of this will be my child.

We are children of God, and He receives us when our time has come." I love the story of Revelation. It's going to kind of get caught up in a dream. The dream is a little bit scary. Most of all, it is a profound reality of something that we will all enjoy. Amen.

Closing

I heard the title of today's message and was like, "Okay, I got to hear this one." There is nothing I don't think that I love more, Don, than hearing you talk about Revelation and the world that is to come that we can't see but we're actually a part of and thank you so, so, so much for that.

And I did a little research because that's what I love to do into the Wizard of Oz, and I found a very powerful quotation that comes ironically from the King of the Winged Monkeys. So, if you remember the Wizard of Oz like I do, Don, you were frightened of the witch who was very scary like the Winged Monkeys. I can remember being a little kid and hiding behind the chair. I was so frightened. But the King of the Winged Monkeys said something that I think is just so amazing and compliments what you said, Don. She and he, she is protected by the power of good and this is greater than the power of evil. And praise God for his amazing goodness that he is the power of good and he's our Father and our brother through Jesus and our friend through the Holy Spirit.

God, we are--join me in a quick word of prayer--God, we are so blown away by this reality that is more real than what we can see. It seems impossible. We get so caught up in what we can see and what we can touch and taste and feel, but Lord, your reality is that we will be with you and see a new heaven and a new earth. God, we praise you. We really do say hallelujah. God our hearts are filled with joy. Please help us to take the joy that we feel now and remember to share it with our friends. God there is no greater gift than to have the gospel shared with them, with us as it was with us. God and help us to be courageous, to be rememberful. We're so forgetful. But God, but your spirit is able to remind us. God help us to have a wonderful week. God, we love you. We thank you. We are so grateful for you. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

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