

Everything New

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Date: 11 September 2016

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, I'm going to spend a few minutes speaking primarily, although fairly loosely, to the reading that we had in Revelation 21. And I doubt this, I'm going to disappoint you.

I know that. I'm going to disappoint you today because on this rededication of the building, the building's not going to be the focus. Okay, so we're very grateful, and we're very thankful for this resource. It's a brilliant resource for us to have. But actually, the focus of our worship and the focus of this day, and every day when we come together for worship, and as Christians, I hope the focus of our lives is Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ is the only one who has changed our hearts, and that's really what's different.

The building, with some expert help, we can do ourselves. But we can't change our hearts. We can't change what we are by nature, and we need God's help to do that. So really, our worship today is about Jesus Christ and what He's done for us, because that's in whose name we gather. I'm going to disappoint you because you are going to get a sermon, I say, I couldn't resist it. You can't not have such a big crowd in church and not give them a good going sermon. So it'll only be 45 minutes, so don't worry too much. I'll keep it a bit shorter than that. There's only my own people who get bludgeoned with 45 minutes of preaching now and again. But we want to share the good news of Jesus Christ, because He's transformed my life and the lives of the people in this church, and we just want to share that. That's what we're about, and that's what we try, with all our hearts, not to be ashamed about, although sometimes in our weakness we are.

The other thing that I might disappoint you with is that this is not the end, this is the beginning. It's absolutely the beginning. It does, for many people, it'll seem like the end of a long and laborious and stressful project, but what I'm saying is it's actually the beginning. You know sometimes when we think of something and plan for something and look forward to something happening, like maybe a holiday or a wedding or something like that, and you plan for it for ages, for a party, and then it happens and it happens quickly and it's over, and you feel quite flat and there's nothing left to look forward to and you're miserable. It's not like that for us today. This is, at one level, it's the end of a physical project, but it's very much the beginning of what we all hope is a new phase of the life of the church here and of our Christian community, and because we also have a fantastic hope, as Christians that Corrie read about, our ministry assistant

Corrie read about that in the passage, write these words down, they're faithful and true, I am making all things new. And we've got that great hope that day to day as Christians, we sense our kind of degree of newness in our lives to a greater or lesser degree, but we also know we've got a great future as Christians because of God's purpose, God's design, God's architect, God's planning that he is doing for us. So I just want to say two things mainly. I want to talk about an imprint and I want to talk about a voice, the imprint and the voice. First of all, the imprint. Now, you look all around you today in St Columbus and see the human imprint is absolutely unmistakable from this building.

[3 : 2 8] You can't deny it. And you can't deny, if you know the building, the change that has come about in the refurbishment. And the imprint of the architect is here, the imprint of the builders are here, the joiners, the painters, the electricians, even the amateurs that have come along over the period. The imprint is absolutely clear and it's seen.

But can I tell you, there's also quite a lot of unseen you saw in the photographs, like the underfloor heating and some of the stuff that's just behind the scenes that you can't see. But the human imprint is absolutely clear and we really are hugely indebted to everyone, the professionals and the amateurs, all the blood, sweat and tears that went into the work we give thanks for today and we honour you all for what you've done.

But the challenge is, and I was going to have two pictures here and I forgot to ask the guys to put it on the screen, sorry. So you just have to imagine. There was pictures earlier on, if you can imagine these pictures. There was a picture of the building which was, when it was all stripped out, completely bare, where the pews were out, there was no floor there, or, he speaks, that's a lot better than last week when we started the service, all the electricity went out in the building for 50 minutes. So that was, you know, you look at it like that, it's just everything was stripped out, the pews were stripped out, upstairs we ripped out all the old pews upstairs. And then the picture of it today, if you can get that picture up now, look, okay, so you can see a huge difference, can't you, from what it was to what it is now. And I just want to put a challenge to you about that. Can you imagine if David and Colin and Alan and all the guys came in and they brought in their drawings into that kind of, the bit when it was wrecked, you know, there was nothing, they just the open floor. They brought their drawings in and the contractors brought in all the raw materials and all the pipes for the heating and they just put it all just here and dumped it in the middle of the floor. Massive big dump of all the gear, the eight miles of IT wiring and everything else that we've got that's piled under the floor. And they just piled it up in the middle of the room and they went out, went home. And in the midnight I get a phone call saying there's been a huge explosion at the church. And I got that rushing out my bed, straight in here and it's all finished. It's been a huge explosion and everything has exploded absolutely perfectly into place and the paint has exploded onto the walls perfectly and the heat and pipes have all exploded perfectly into the right way and everything has perforated, the seats have exploded into their place, 200 of them at the front. Can you imagine how absolutely with one stick of jelly just stuck under the big pile if we thought that would have finished the project? It's impossible isn't it? Because it's a human imprint we see completely and absolutely and entirely on the work of this building. And I don't believe that's any different from creation and from humanity and from who we are as people. There's beauty around us and there's order and there's design and there's architecture and there's thoughtfulness and there's raw material that's been molded into this creation that we live in and also into our own characters and into our own moral beings and into family and into love and into joy and into everything else we are. I was watching this week a programme called The Highlands and then if you've seen it the Wild

Heart or something, The Highlands. And it's just a kind of nature programme really about the Highlands and about ospreys and eagles and everything. It's got fantastic photography, glorious pictures and you know it's Ewan McGregor who narrates it. He's no David Attenborough but he's not bad, he's got a Scottish accent and that's quite good for doing the Highland thing. But you can just see such incredible beauty and order and a signature behind it.

You see signatures behind this building. You see David's signature and Colin and Alan's signature and Allie and there's another people's signature, you see that. But in creation absolutely we see that and as you look in the mirror you see that. You see the hand of God. You know we see a plan. We see the designers drawings. We see the purpose behind it and I'm asking the question where's the leap of faith? Where's the leap of faith? Or is it believing in God or is it believing that all of that glorious beauty and order and majesty just happened with one big explosion randomly that nobody really was behind it, that there's no purpose behind this universe and we're just randomly passing through and sticking jellied me under things all over the place. It's very clear. We can see God's hand and we choose I think often in our lives to suppress that. We choose to suppress the reality and the clear evidence that deep, deep down we know is there that God is the Creator and he's a God who also is a voice and he speaks to us. I'll close my Bible here. But the word of God, the Bible and the person of Jesus is how he communicates to us and as the one who's created, if you get to spend a bit of time thinking about that and science allows us now to see how huge and how magnificent and how overwhelming is the size of the universe and if you think there's a Creator behind that, what he must be like and very often we just stick our fingers up at him but he's the God, he's the Creator and who does speak to us. He's not too posh and too important and too significant to speak to us but rather he's the one who speaks intimately and powerfully to us and if he is who he says he is then he's worth listening to I think. And again I just say to you, if David or Colin or Alan had come in here with their plans and Neil as well, come in with their plans and with a way forward of how to do it and the best way to fulfil the designs and the disgust back and forward with the expert professional input and if three or four of us from the church say, thanks

[10:04] I, that's fine, na na. We've got some celliteque down there and we've got a few bits and bobs in the boiler and we'll just do it ourselves and I'm sure I can draw something on the back of a bit of paper and if we completely ignored their wisdom and their professionalism and their expertise it would be ridiculous for us to do that. We're completely missed and when we have ignored them, it probably has been a disaster but the same is true with God is it not? If he is who he says he is, it's folly for us to ignore him. It's folly for us not to listen to his word and most importantly not to listen to him and Jesus who calls himself the word because that's what he is in John chapter one, he communicates with us, calls himself the word. Very briefly and I promise I'll not take long over this, he says four things, very briefly, oh he says a lot more than that, four things I just want to highlight that some of it is picked up in this passage. First he says I know something is wrong. In the world in which we live and in our hearts and in our lives we know something is wrong and he talks about that in verse four when he talks about the future. He says

I'm going to wipe away every tear from the eye. Death and mourning and crying and pain shall be no more for the old or things have passed away. Now that is God saying to us in Jesus Christ he is saying I know something is wrong, it's not as it should be. We knew this building there was lots of things wrong, we sat in here getting dripped on with rain from the roof, we knew things were going wrong, we sat in here and it was 20 degrees freezing cold because the heating had burst, we knew there was something wrong, it wasn't rocket science and as we look around us and sometimes when you look into your own heart you know that there is something wrong, something that's not right. In our world absolutely and in our hearts and our relationships and God says that stems from a spiritual problem, a spiritual problem where there is a chasm between us and God because we've decided to go our own way, we've decided to ignore him, we don't want him to be the architect of our lives and the one who guides and keeps us. So there is something major wrong and that is introduced death and mourning and crying and pain into this world, horrible. But he also says and this isn't great, you know you can't put it right. Derek Graham, Ali Andrew couldn't put this building right in our own and that's just an absolutely obvious example but spiritually he says you know in our relationship with him we can't put it right. We can, you know he says you can try your best, you can be nice and decent human beings, you can be charitable and all these things are great and important but he says you can't change your heart which is naturally rebellious, I guess there's an imperfection, you can't love me and you can't love your fellow human beings perfectly which is what I demand, that's what God says is death is the sentence to that, death being separation and separation that goes on eternally.

And now there's many things that we like to avoid in life and many things we can't avoid in life but none of us can avoid that, it's the one reality that binds us absolutely all together that we are mortal and we are dying and God says that that is a spiritual issue, a spiritual problem, there's no get out of jail free card for us in that area so one certain fact of life, you know you want to be an undertaker if you want a really great job because you're always going to be guaranteed work, aren't you in that work but don't take me up on that. You can't put it right, we can't do that, we can't put it right and God says we can't do that but thirdly he says we're nearly done, thirdly he says I came to fix it. Now that's the great thing, you know we can grumble and complain at the gospel message that says look something major is wrong, spiritual, eternal, difficult, a massive problem and even worse when he says you're powerless to do anything about it, we really don't like that whole concept of being powerless, none of us do but then he says but I came to fix it, it's crazy isn't it, who is God, we've talked about this massive world and this great creation and the absolute mind blowing reality even of the physical creation and if God has made that what is he like and this huge humongous job God that there is and we wonder what is he like, he's not going to answer it in me, he's not going to answer it in my puny small insignificant life but he's not what people think because he became flesh 2,000 years ago in the person of Jesus Christ and that's the one that we come to worship in our lives, he's changed our lives, he didn't have a palace, he didn't have a bodyguard, he wasn't famous, he was homeless, he was a refugee, he was a rebel against convention, he lambasted the religious leaders of his day, he was falsely accused, he was convicted as a criminal to death, he died on a cross, ridiculous, is that the end of the story and is the rest just wishful thinking of a bunch of punters through the centuries who just wanted something desperate to cling on to, no, from the beginning to the end of the Bible we have one clear plan that God had and Jesus Christ is absolutely the centre of it so his death on the cross was no mistake, it was no kind of failed who on his part as it were, this was part of this plan, his eternal plan and on the third day he rose from the dead, the only person to have done that, the only person to have done that and never had to face death again, you know there's people we hear and we read about things, people who died and then rose again after being on the hospital bed for two days or something but they still got to die, they're going to die again at some point but Jesus rose victorious having defeated the power of the grave and death and he did that not because he himself was guilty but because he was taking our guilt and that separation and that great and deep problem that lies between us and God, he deals with that and as we trust in him, he's a, in other words he's a good football analogy, he's a substitute, he comes on in our place and he takes what we deserve and we get what we don't deserve from him, that is forgiveness and we are covered in his righteousness and we are forgiven and we're made right with

God and it's a gift so none of us here as the church and as Christians of the church think we're any better than anyone, God forbid we're worse but we've come to that place where we recognise what Jesus has done and it's a free and full gift and we've grasped that and it's changed and transformed our lives and that's the invitation that comes from here that Jesus Christ is the one who has a plan, revelations the last book in the Bible, it speaks primarily and mainly about things that have still to happen as opposed to what's happened in the past because the Bible is both a history and also pointing forward a prophecy and he says that this is all part of the plan and Jesus Christ is speaking that he's still got to finish his work he's making and that's the last thing I want to say is that he's making everything new so as Christians we are people who in our lives you know in different ways and God's dealt with us differently but he's and sometimes we don't realise it very well sometimes we forget sometimes we slip away but he's made everything new for us he's made our lives new as Christians we're reconciled to God in such a way that we love him and we want to serve him and we put him first he's given us a new heart a heart that is sensitive to him and that is forgiven and that is made new because of what Jesus has done and we kind of wake up every day with a sense of newness and even the Bible is a great verse that says so great I've forgotten it there was various verses that were flying about my head it's to the effect of even though you're getting really old you'll still feel new inside what's that verse someone on the way but also he reminds us that there's a great verse which is even though we die yet we shall live and so you know there's this great hope that death for the Christian isn't the great unspoken embarrassment that's only nobody mentions it's an enemy but it's not it's a defeated enemy for us and even though we die yet shall we live in this section here speaks about what God's purposes and plans are for us in making everything new and we look forward to that we look forward to this new heavens and the earth where there's no more death no more crying no more pain and no more mourning you know all the things that we want to be no more in this life that affect us and that break us and that cause us to be miserable so often in this life so that I he says I am making everything all things new he's doing it now he will continue to do that you know even in this life we like to get new things I'm sure most people here like getting new things this is great almost like feels like we've got a new building but you know it's going to get scuffed and the paints going to get scratched and things aren't going to work and it always reminds me always of that this newness thing which fades is that when you and I like shoes I like a really good pair of shoes got my cowboy boots on today but you know when you want you need to get new shoes and you go into the shop and you've got what you think are pretty smart shoes but then when you're taking them off because the new shoes are there they look so scruffy and so old and you're kind of embarrassed by them because even these lovely new shoes which were shiny and fresh when you got them they fade and they become old and that's the reality of the world in which you live that's just a very trivial minor example but this divine gift that we have of eternal life through Jesus Christ it doesn't fade and he never leaves us or forsakes us

in this life through death or through into eternal life with him in this new heavens and the new earth and that's the hope that we have and that's the hope that we want to share and it's the reason why in all the thanks that we're giving to everyone today the deepest and most important thanks that we give is to the Lord Jesus Christ to his architect's plan for our lives. It is a great plan that from the beginning to the end is revolve around Jesus Christ dying on a cross. How ludicrous is that? How counter cultural is that? Can you imagine ever all these ordinary people here putting their faith and trust in a crucified Savior, crucified God, a crucified Jew from 2000 years ago? What could possibly make people do that? That it's true. These words he says here are trustworthy and true.

[21 : 55] Write them down. He is truth and we've experienced that in our lives. His rescue plan, our past is forgiven, our present is full of hope and our future everything is going to be new.

These words are trustworthy and true. Write them down in other words record them and repeat them again and again and again and that's all we do. We don't have in our own we're not reinventing anything. We simply bring this old message because it's new every day and it's transformed our lives. I hope if you're not a Christian here today, if you're visiting then I really hope that you'll consider that message and consider Jesus Christ and what he says and his word. I say but what he says but also think about the lives of Christians maybe you've met a change and we're far from perfect and often we're rubbish examples of what it means to follow Jesus Christ but please don't judge Christ on us.

Go to him and to his words for yourself and see what he says because he's made you just as surely as he's made me and we are all part of this world which has been created by him.

Broken because we've rebelled against him but he provides the way back for us. Let's bow our heads briefly and pray. Father God we thank you for your word. We thank you for the gospel, the good news which is the gospel, the fact that what makes it such good news is the bad news that we often experience in life and the deep seated knowledge that we have that not everything is okay and that we can't fix it ourselves and we rejoice when we recognise that because that's all you want us to do and you want us then to come and trust in what you have done and we will know that this resurrected, this risen and ascended Savior has a living word which speaks to us and changes us and transforms us and enables us to see the purpose of our existence not being meaningless or random or without ethical or moral foundation coming from nowhere, going really ultimately nowhere but we can see a great purpose and a great plan, a hugely glorious divine architect who has come himself and taken on humanity and being our substitute and giving us hope in a future. May that be what motivates us as Christians and may it be something we want to share and bless that to us today and as we sing in response to you and to the gospel that has changed our lives, may we do so wholeheartedly for we ask in Jesus name, amen.