*The Glory About to Be Revealed*

Romans 8:12-25

Getting the new washer and dryer at the parsonage was one of those adventures that threatened to be never ending. Once we had purchased them, we waited with great expectation the time of their delivery. And surprise, surprise we got a call on the day of delivery asking if it would be ok for them to deliver them early. Well, of course! And they were punctual. The appliances fit through all doors and the delivery men prepared to hook them up for us. So I got out of their way, not wanting anything to stand in the way. By this time my excitement was pretty intense and I had already gathered my first load of wash. But things were not to be. It wasn’t long before one of the men came upstairs and said that there were some problems. So with great anxiety I followed back down the stairs. First, the cord on the dryer would not reach to the outlet fixed to the ceiling of the basement. Second, they could not get the hoses off the faucets because they had rusted shut. The verdict was that they could not hook up my appliances due to strict regulations from the store. I was deeply disappointed. There sat the new washer and dryer and I was unable to use them. My clothes had to wait for their transformation to clean. Eventually we got the right people to fix the problems and the great day of the first wash arrived. How joyous that occasion was supposed to be. But as the first wash cycle began and agitator started to do its work, a loud grinding, scrapping sound accompanied that motion. The first wash would have to wait! I called the GE appliance help line and the person on the other end recognized that the sound was not normal and immediately scheduled a repair person the following Thursday. With cautious anticipation I waited and the repairman came right on schedule. My relief was great when he recognized the problem and was able to fix it within a few minutes. I waited patiently as he proceeded to tell me all about my new appliances, my excitement mounting. Finally he left and I was ready to experience my first, very much anticipated good washing of our clothes. And I was not disappointed. The appliances actually worked very well.

As Christians we anticipate a future that we have been centuries waiting for. Christ’s return is supposed to usher in a transformed world, a just and peaceful world, where all elements of this good creation would work in harmony, the way it was originally intended to work. We have been waiting for the whole world to be put right.

Much has happened since the fall. God has continued to work with creation, particularly with humans to bring about the healing of the world. After the fall, human disobedience to God the earth produced thorns and thistles, fractures in the natural order of things, chaos where orderliness should have been, war where peace was meant to be. Humans lost the ability to relate to God intimately. So, God tried to create a people who would listen and follow his commandments, a people who would be holy, set apart from others, given very specific instructions to follow. But they failed to live up to expectations, went into exile and were eventually led out from slavery to freedom through the wilderness. God’s way of relating to them was through pillar and fire and the voice of Moses.

Centuries later the tabernacle presence of God was replaced by the indwelling Spirit. Humans were not being led back to Egypt. Instead, humans were able to relate to God in a new way. God’s very presence was not confined to tabernacles, but dwelled within humans through the Spirit Jesus ushered in through his sacrifice and resurrection. Unfortunately the new way of relating to God had its problems. The rest of the world wasn’t quite ready. Christians were persecuted and suffered at the hands of those who could not accept the message of Jesus’ great demonstration of God’s love.

So, Christians anticipated that the glory to come would far outweigh the suffering they were receiving. It has always been that way with Christians. We anticipate a world that will be fixed, healed, and put right. Humans were always meant to be wise stewards of this creation. We are meant to be God’s agents in bringing the wise, healing, restorative divine justice to the whole created order. And God will be victorious!

Humans also wait the final redemption of the body with limits being lifted from it. Right now we can be viewed as pale shadows of our future selves. Total salvation is not quite completed as we can tell from events of this past week. But, as Christians we live in hope. We live in anticipation, waiting for the final wash that will complete God’s work in this world. Until then, God and all of creation is groaning in labor to make that final wash, that final transformation happen.

So why don’t we just wait for it to happen? Why are we working so hard for something that is going to happen anyway? Christians must be at the forefront of bringing it in! We are God’s facilitators of readying creation for its final transformation. We are charged with doing what each of us can to beautify creation around us, to promote peace, to spread the good news of salvation and hope, to help God change hearts and lives. We are charged to live empowered by the Spirit to spread God’s love to others in the face of overwhelming disasters and tragic mistakes that harm and destroy what God has lovingly created. We are charged to live our lives as if the kingdom of God were already here on the face of this earth and in our lives, which it is in a limited edition. We are charged with living the life that Jesus teaches us day in and day out. We are charged with helping God change the world, even when it looks like nothing is working. We are charged with giving the world signs of peace in our interactions with each other and giving the rest of the world the same hope we share as the body of Christ.

For Paul, in his writing to the Romans the primary key to making a difference in the world is prayer. Our charge in that is to give intercessive prayer for a world groaning to be made whole. We are the implementers of God’s work in the world.

Now is the time for faith to be renewed in this country. Many children are growing up not knowing anything about Jesus, not having the Christian hope that we have. Is it any wonder that there is a growing cynicism about life and the world? When our hope lies in ourselves and in our country, we fail in that hope. When humans see the world around them falling apart, it is easy to give in to indifference and skepticism and hopelessness. Instead of seeing the world in self-destruct mode, Christians see events as part of God’s groaning and creations anticipation of a new, transformed world. Our hope lies in the fact that God will be victorious, that this world will be what God intended it to be, that Jesus Christ will come again and usher in the new creation. We are anticipatory people, expecting and believing in God’s promises. And we have our part to play in it in all that we do in the name of Christ.