

## “What’s New?”

**Acts 11: 1-18; Revelation 21:1-6; John 13: 31-35; Psalm 148 5-06-07**

It seems that as we grow older we begin to agree with the author of Ecclesiastes who wrote: “Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher! All is vanity. What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hurries to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south, and goes around to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they continue to flow. All things are wearisome: more than one can express; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, or the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done: there is nothing new under the sun.”

And possibly there is not. Everything seems pretty familiar to our minds as history and life seem to replay themselves over and over again. Perhaps, there is nothing that is truly new, instead, there are fresh ways of looking at things, the discovery of a new slant or angle on an old problem or challenge. When we discover a new way of looking at something, doors swing open in our minds and we find ourselves renewed and refreshed in our living and thinking.

This morning’s scripture readings are full of new ways of looking at old problems and concepts.

Peter awakened to the possibilities of the spread of the gospel through his vision on the rooftop in Joppa. While the vision seems to be all about clean and unclean food, according to the rules of Judaism, it has deeper implications. God, through this illustration, spoke loudly to Peter telling him that he was not to judge what was clean and what was not clean. God was to be the judge. Peter’s vision broadened his perspective and he understood that the “good news” of Christ was meant to be shared with everyone and not restricted to a small group. The Gentiles were as good an audience as was the Jewish community and just as hungry for spiritual guidance.

Pushing out the boundaries of his mission enabled Peter to discover and establish a broad base of support that would help the fledgling religion survive no matter what may have happened to this new way of looking at life. And, as we know, much did happen to those who chose to follow the way set before them by Jesus.

Jesus believed that the new movement could be sustained through a rephrasing of all the commandments and laws into just one commandment to “Love one another.” We might think that having just one rule to follow as we live our lives would be very freeing. But all of us struggle with this commandment on a daily basis. Perhaps, it is because we have a difficult time loving ourselves—an essential step before we can move outward to love those around us. While it might seem a simple thing to love one another, it is difficult to accomplish. And, yet, that is what is asked of us. It is a new way to view life in which we learn to put others before ourselves. Being the humans that we are, this requires a lot of work that sometimes seems to go nowhere. We feel we are marching in place and that there is never any progress. We need to learn that things never change overnight, that it takes time and patience to change old patterns of living. We also need to remember that the only person we can change is our self. We can become more loving caring people but we can never demand it of someone else.

In Revelation God tells us that our Creator makes all things new. God does not make new things but all things new that are already in existence. For me this says that we need to stop where we are in life and take a good look all around to see things with new eyes and new understanding. Old relationships can be revitalized and made better if we give them some space

and some grace and set aside the same old ways of acting and reacting to one another. When we are able to do this, we begin to make things new again. We begin to find more interest in life and more that moves us forward in the direction in which we are meant to move. As Paul said, we will begin to see things “more clearly that we only saw through a glass darkly.” But this requires that we have some patience with ourselves and the willingness to try new approaches to the life that is all around us.

The message contained in the pages of our Bible calls us to new life over and over again. It calls us to open our eyes to new and better ways of living and moving and having our being.

If we ask ourselves “What’s new?” The answer must be, with love and effort and with every new dawn, “everything.” Amen