

From Here To Eternity
Revelation 21:1-6a

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As you may know, Anna Best and I occupy a small suite of offices just down the hall – we're in two separate offices, but our workspaces face each other, and so we've gotten into the habit of two things – one is just sort of yelling what we need to each other – we try always to be cognizant that there isn't someone else around when we get to yelling at each other, and the other is probably related to the first – we've gotten really good at ignoring each other, and occasionally we read each other's minds.

So, I was just sitting there working when Anna came into my office with a slip of paper – I saw her in my peripheral vision and I was focused on what I was doing, so I just held up my hand to take the paper without looking away from what I was doing – neither of us finds it rude, it's just efficient for us.

So she put the slip of paper in my hand and exited the office quietly.

A couple of minutes later, I looked aside at the slip of paper and it took my breath away – you know how that happens, you're not expecting something and there it is.

It was the list for the All Saints' communion.

It took me aback – it was a list of the loved ones lost by people that I love. It caught me for a moment.

Do you know how that happens? When you've lost a loved one and you catch a glimpse, a shadow even? There's a just hint of a fragrance on an old pillow, and there you are.

There are a few notes of that old sweet song, and you can almost dance.

You're in the restaurant and the meal has just a hint of the flavor, the seasoning that she used so well...

It is so easy to be taken back.

Sacraments take us back also, each in their own way.

Baptism is the sacrament of inclusion – we belong God, forever. Indeed, there are funeral liturgies that make the claim that in death our baptism is complete as we know that God is always faithful to those promises we claim in the moment of baptism.

Communion is the sacrament of nourishing, where Christ gives us strength for the work that we are called to do – but communion is also a sacrament of inclusion.

Both baptism and communion are marked with the language of eternity.

In baptism, Jesus promises to be with us always, even to the end of the age.¹

In communion, we are promised that we will stand together with the redeemed of all the ages in the day of resurrection.²

And here is the thing: eternity is now.

I still love the way that Frederick Buechner puts it best, “Sometimes an event occurs in our lives (a birth, a death, a marriage – some event of unusual beauty, pain, joy) through which we catch a glimpse of what our lives are all about and maybe even what life itself is all about, and this glimpse of what ‘it’s all about’ involves not just the present but the past and the future too.

Inhabitants in time that we are, we stand on such occasions with one foot in eternity.

God, as Isaiah says (57:15) ‘inhabiteth eternity’ but stands with one foot in time. The part of time where he stands most particularly is Christ, and thus in Christ we catch a

¹ Matthew 28:20

² Book of Common Worship, All Saints’ Day

glimpse of what eternity is all about, what God is all about, and what we ourselves are all about too.”³

Sacraments are the outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace. They are also the place our moments, days, years, and lives experience a little slip of the curtain – the veil drops for just a second, and we realize that the new heaven and the new earth that we are promised in Revelation are going on all around, above, within, and underneath the old heaven and old earth we’re living in now.

Here at this font, we are met by Jesus, who tells us, “always...”

Here at this table, we are met by Jesus, who says, “All...”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

³ Buechner, Frederick. Wishful Thinking: a seeker’s ABC. (HarperOne, San Francisco, 1973) p27