

Revelation 21

It's Mothers' Day as you know...I don't know what that day is like for you. It depends, I suppose, on lots of things – I know today can be really hard for people, and if that's true for you, please know that you're not alone, and that here is a place it's ok not to be ok. OK????

For me, it's a lot different since my own mom died. I'm not a mother myself so that makes it different too...sometimes I wonder what I've missed by making that choice....and then here come these readings that talk about....home. A longing for, yearning for, vision of a home. Here more than anywhere else I've served, I think most of you share what it means to wonder where home is....is it where I grew up? Is it where I currently live? I didn't realize until mom died that for me home was where she was. Now...do you feel that way? Is there a kind of restlessness in you about that?

What I'm going to ask of you this morning is that you let the Spirit of gentleness and of restlessness clear inside you a space....

A place of readiness A place of possibility A birthing place A space for remembering. A space for deep knowing A connecting space And into that space, and perhaps out of it as well, these words REV 21: 1-6

You know that place, don't you? You KNOW it. In a way that is beyond explaining, that defies logic; that is no mere whistling in the dark...You KNOW it's real.

This is the place you were made for. And as the words enter your being, it's almost as though they stir a memory or what once WAS....a garden....a world we once belonged to

And even though we have not yet, or only momentarily touched it, even though we no don yet identify ourselves as part of it, The memory of it is a beacon that guides us toward the place where we belong, and for the rest of our lives.

For the caterpillar, a knowing yearning stirs when she sees a butterfly light on a flower nearby. Without explanation, an inner knowing is there, that this is real, and is possible, and more true to myself than I have yet come to understand.

The place the poet describes is home. The place we were created for. Our inner beings long for it, our society cries out for it – the whole creation groans as if in labour, to bring this place into being. A place where God's very home is with us. In our midst, by our side, where God will dry our tears, where death will be no more, where God makes all things new and the thirsty are given – without price – water from the river of life.

Yes. YES This is the promise. This is the memory and this is the call. But listen – there's a secret I have to tell you – You already know it, don't you? I can see it in your eyes. And read it in the angles of your body as you stood to sing the Gloria just now...You already know the secret.

This time...This place...Described by John – the new heaven and the new earth

The time when God's home is with us And where God is busy making all things new –

That place is here And that time is now.

Behold – Says God – Behold I am the first and the last and I make all things new.

Only you know how all things are made new for you and in you - In your life

Perhaps not even you know...sometimes we're not aware of the action of God's renewing spirit in our lives, but you can be sure...you can be SURE that God is birthing in you a newness

Calling you – nudging you, challenging you toward an inner world and an outer world

Of justice and kindness and humble walking with the God whose dwelling place is right here and right now. The God who DOES dry our tears with mother-like compassion and tenderness, and who, in Jesus, begins that time when these things are no longer future hope but present reality.

Jesus commanded one thing: that we love one another. And when we do that, he said, the world would see that we belong to him. When we love one another.

There are many many places where there is no love And where what masquerades as love is in reality something quite different.

BUT there ARE places where love is found or perhaps where love finds u. Such places exist. They are marked by laughter and respect; by the freedom to be who we are, exactly as we are, by the freedom to change and grow, by justice and honest struggle and willingness to live without answers...by life giving conversation, by simplicity and saying thankyou.....by kindness and community, and caring for others in need.

Where those things are, Love is And where love is, God is And the new heaven and earth have already begun.

God's spirit is in you; each of you; bringing to birth a new thing. My prayer for every one of you this mothers' day is that you will first know yourself to be loved and valuable beyond measure.....that every day you will open yourself to the newness God brings....that you will hear God's call and claim on your life saying "follow me in ways of love and life" that you will live that call in your personal lives, your public lives, your work, your school.....your community....

That Jesus' love will be your measuring stick as you do your own part to bring about the new heaven and new earth that we are promised and that has already begun.

When I was a teenager, just coming into the church, trying to decide if it was for me or not, there was a poster...it had a butterfly on it and it said" Behold, I make all things new" and then in smaller letters, just below the butterfly, it said "Wanna help?" And I thought "yes. Yes I do" Pretty simple....but most good things are.

Here's the final secret. Listen once more to the text and see if you know.

The secret is....THE SECRET IS....this is not really a time and not really a place....but a person

The new heaven and the new earth future and present are centred in, grounded in, Jesus.

And when the longing in you for love and for wholeness meets the spirit of the Risen Christ

There is a unifying transforming and holy birthing And the new earth is born

In the relationship between humans and God In God's love and passionate care for this earth, here and now, As people open themselves to God, listening within themselves for the truth of God's promise to make all things new AND LIVING IN A WAY THAT MAKES THE OUTER WORLD RESEMBLE THE VISION

When, in the process, we are brought daily into a deeper relationship with the author of that vision

Then, in that relationship, there is a new heaven and a new earth. Not a place but a relationship.

In the same way as a home is not a specific place but an experience of being safe and loved and accepted and free

And in the same way as motherhood is not necessarily a biological birthing but rather a life giving relationship that can take many forms....

In that same way, this home described by John is not a place or a time but an experience of following the Spirit in the ways of love and justice and love.

Clear the space inside you for the Spirit – who is already there. Feel the new heaven and new earth...the longing for it...the bodily memory of it...the truth of it...the passion for it and the readiness to do your part in making it real here and now.

Let that vision soak into your being, inform your seeing and knowing and acting

Seek the one who has given the vision This restlessness, this yearning for home, and give yourself to living it here and now until the whole creation is made new.

Amen and amen