

Revelation and the Wizard of Oz

November 10, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled Revelation and the Wizard of Oz. Thank you to Geoff, Gloria, Heather and Don for being part of the service. The scripture reading is Revelation 12 10 to 11. Happy birthday this week to Lorena.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

My name is Geoff Taylor and on behalf of the Christians who meet here in the name of Jesus, I welcome you whether you're here in person today or watching this on the internet later, we are here to celebrate our Lord and Savior. I will do the first one because I just got it and I'll forget it if I don't. There is a flower arrangement here and there's lots more. Yesterday we celebrated the life of one of our members and it was a good time because he lived to a good age and there were a lot of good memories about having that family as part of our family. I have a number of announcements. I think I will do those first and then I will pray.

We have some birthdays. Who has a birthday today? How old are you going to be, Ellis? Six. Can we sing happy birthday? 🎵 Happy birthday to you, to Jesus be true, may God richly bless you. Happy birthday to you. 🎵 Six is a really great age and we have another birthday this week in the same family. Mom Heather is also having a birthday so happy birthday to you. An anniversary this week for Len and Debby so if you're talking to them, congratulate them. Oh, they are? Oh, they're over here. See, you're supposed to be over there. Okay, well then, happy anniversary to you. How many? 35. Wow, good for you. That's awesome. I didn't even see you.

All right, a couple of other things. The third quarter financial statements are available and you can get them by email or Adam can give you a hard copy. Upcoming events this week on Wednesday evening, Bible study here and the Exodus study continues on Sunday mornings. There are Operation Christmas Child boxes that have arrived and Adam tells me that the deadline is fairly quick in the next couple of weeks so if you want to fill one, you should grab one today and get busy filling that in the next little while.

Okay, there are a couple of prayer requests that I will include in my prayer. I think I got everything. Two new baptisms last month, Aiden and Carmen, so we'll pray for them and some of you know Harold. I can give you a bit of an update on him. The problem with a brain bleed that followed the stroke or was with the stroke has corrected itself and so he is still in hospital. Sharon is able to visit with him but it's going to be some time before he's going to be stable enough to come home. All right, are there any other requests for prayer? All right, let's go to God at this time.

Father, we celebrate the life of Len, one of your good and faithful servants and we pray a special blessing on their family at this time. It's difficult to know that he won't be a part of things the way he has been even in recent years when he had more difficulty coming to services but it's with absolute joy that we remember and we celebrate the relationship that you have with him that gives us confidence that he is now enjoying fellowship with you and with his family, that life is a thing that has given him the opportunity for an even greater existence now.

Father, we pray for those who just put on Christ in baptism. We pray for Aiden and for Carmen in their young search for your son and for his gifts. We thank you, Father, that they've made this decision and may we be bold and courageous in helping them in that new life. We pray for Harold and Sharon and their family. Father, we ask that you be with them. We ask continued improvement for Harold and we ask that Sharon be able to fill her days with meaningful things. We pray for their kids and grandkids that they will find peace as Harold is kept in hospital for an extended time. Father, we celebrate with you this morning the great victory that you have for us. We have everything in Christ and we give everything to him that he may lift us up in time the way that you lifted him up. Make us your servants at this time, Father, as he was when he walked upon this earth. We thank you for this time together to celebrate your love, to celebrate the son who bought us back and redeemed us. We pray in his name. Amen.

Communion

God said to Adam, "You can eat from every tree in this garden of Eden, but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die." God also said, "The soul who sins is the one who will die."

Jesus said in John 11, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. For as in Adam, all die. So in Christ, all will be made alive." You see, just at the right time, when we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

In John 3, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth. No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. For you have been born again through the living and enduring Word of God. So resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Resist him standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering."

Choosing God as Lord is to acknowledge that he is sovereign and supreme in the universe. To accept him as Savior is to accept his gift of salvation offered on the cross. To regard him as Father is to go one step further. Ideally, a Father is the one in your life who provides and protects. That is exactly what God has done. He has provided for your needs. He has protected you from harm. He has adopted you and given you his name. God has proven himself as a faithful Father. Now it falls to us to be trusting children.

Let God give you what the world cannot. Rely on him alone for your affirmation and encouragement. You are God's child, and God will give you the blessing he promised because you are his child. Galatians 4. For Christ died for your sins once for all. The righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God. It is this Father we honor and his Son in remembrance today. Let us pray.

Thank you, Father, for the incredible sacrifice of your Son, Jesus, who gave us his body and blood so that we could go from death to life.

Reading

Revelation 12:10-11

Good morning. The reading this morning is Revelation 12 verses 10 through 11.

"Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and authority of His Messiah, for the accuser of our brothers and sisters who accuses them before our God day and night has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

Sermon

Revelation and the Wizard of Oz

Morning everyone. Yesterday was an interesting day, some celebrations, the celebration not of the death of Len, but the life of Len. And it was wonderful to see people who come so far and wide to be part of him. And we will remember him and keep him in our heart forever. And we want to be with Dorothy and sending out her love to her and all of the family. And then a few hours later, we had the pleasure of baptizing one of our grandsons and they gathered together and his name is Aiden and it was a lovely experience. So a lot of day of celebrations yesterday.

How many of you have watched the movie, The Wizard of Oz? Yeah. It scared the daylights out of me when I was a kid, especially that witch on that broom. And I want to talk about that today. Fear. Franklin Roosevelt said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Duke Wellington said, "Fear is fear." That's all I've got to say about it. And I am afraid of fear. Fear is pain arising from the anticipation of evil. C.S. Lewis wrote, "There's nothing like fear in our human mind." Martin Luther wrote, "We will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us." Fear is

mentioned many, many times in scripture. And for those of us who watched this movie, The Wizard of Oz, I was very, very young at the time and it was frightening.

And it's difficult to grasp the entire meaning of all of this. Revelation 12, 11, things become clear when it says, "They overcame the evil one by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much even to shrink from death." So many of the apostles and disciples in the New Testament, many of them died at the sword. Rome wanted to control the world, but God wasn't allowing that. And there were people who were martyred and they were willing to do so because of their faith. "They overcame the evil one by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much even to shy, even to shrink from death." I try to put myself in this situation and I can't. It's just so overwhelming.

In the movie, The Wizard of Oz, Dorothy's living on a farm. She's loved by her family and farm hands. And then Dorothy's caught up in this dream. There's this horrible witch out to get them all. And the farm hands in this dream that Dorothy has turned differently from just working on the farm. One becomes a scarecrow, one becomes a woodman, one a tin man, and one, my favorite, the cowardly lion. And then they are on their way to somehow find Oz. There's a witch that chases them and the wizard of the castle is there. He wants they want to find their way back home, Dorothy does. But there's this evil one, always attacking. But Dorothy finds her way home in this nightmare. She awakens and she tells her family and the farm hands her nightmare. And as she explains the nightmare, they kind of giggle a little bit at it. But it was terrifying. But she made her way home. And it's true that one day the devil will no longer exist.

Satan, the accuser, is all about division, hurt, confusion, selfishness, and anything that is negative. But our victory comes to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our salvation through his blood. Sometimes if you have the opportunity, just open up a concordance, find the word blood, and you'll notice how often it is used. The blood of Christ for our sins. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. And so Jesus knew what he was all about for us. It was in the first century what this happened, but now many generations later it still is triumphant in our lives. The sacrifice of Jesus for our forgiveness. And he promises, "I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. I am always with you. And I've given you my love by shedding my blood for the forgiveness of sins."

So Revelation reminds us how often it talks about this. Revelation 1.5, "To him who has loved us and freed us from our sins by his blood." Acts 20.28, "Guard yourselves in all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which Jesus purchased with his own blood." And then in Ephesians 1 and verse 7, "In him, Jesus, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Now somebody might say, "What's all the blood stuff? Like let's get on to something positive." Well, that is the positive. He took our place and he lives in us. There's no division. It's this is what Jesus came to do for us. And won't it be amazing that when it's our turn, like Glenn's turn yesterday celebrating, to see your loved ones again, but look into the eyes of Jesus. It's not just a dream. It's a reality.

Yes, there are times in life that can be nightmarish, but the reality is his promise. I love you. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. And then he adds this, "I am with you always." 24.7. So Jesus said, "This is my blood, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." As we said, the scripture to me overwhelmed. I think it's fantastic. They overcame Satan by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony, and they did not shrink even from death. The Holy Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. And now if we are children, we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. We have the most incredible life. We are heirs of God. Put that on the will. Heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ. And sign your name. If indeed we share in his sufferings, we'll share in his glory. And it can be difficult.

But listen to these words that many of us know so well. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Another promise. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else, in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. If you're having a bad day, just thank him for what he's doing for us. I will never leave

you. In the worst situations, Jesus is with us. He's always with us. Sometimes we don't know why things happen but he's with us.

They didn't love their lives so much that they would shrink from death. They didn't. The Hebrew writer was looking ahead. They knew of the persecutions and the terror but they were looking ahead of what would happen. In chapter 11, it's difficult to read. It says, "Christians died by the mouths of lions. Some were tortured. Some were chained. Some were put to death by the sword. They were persecuted and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them. They went to their death knowing that they're going to be with the Lord." And that's true in our lives as well. Lives can be difficult. Life can be challenging but we know the promise of God.

The Hebrew writer does not leave us waiting when he says, "But you have come." He already sees it. You have come. You're already here. You've come to Mount Zion. You've come to the heavenly Jerusalem. You've come to the living Word of God. To thousands and thousands. You have come to thousands upon thousands upon thousands of joyful assembly. The church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven. Just think of that. Your name is already there. Name written in heaven. Of course, God knows her name but he also knows each one of us. We've come to God. We almost remember the promise of God. Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you. The Lord is my helper and he is with us always.

In the very, very brief book of Jude, he says these words, "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves and God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternity."

See, in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, he sees this and I'd like us to see this too. I saw the holy city. I saw a new Jerusalem. They were coming down out of heaven from God. And then I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with us. There will be no more death, no more mourning, no more crying, no more pain. It will pass away." And then these words that we will receive. I am making everything new. This is the promise of God.

And so in the 19th chapter of Revelation, the word hallelujah is used and used and used. Hallelujah. Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. Praise our God. All you, his servants who revere him, both small and great, is going to say it again. Hallelujah. For our Lord God Almighty reigns, which is a wonderful hymn. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory. Whoever is thirsty, let them receive the free gift of the water of life. What a precious number of promises he gives us. We don't have to be afraid.

Sometimes it's easier said than done, but we don't have to be afraid. And here's why. This is a brief message and I'll conclude with this. And if you can picture in your mind, I find it just incredible. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first, the first earth had passed away, no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying these words. Now the dwelling of God is with men and women and he will live with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God. And then these words, he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Guess what? There will be no more death because there won't be death. There will be no more death. There will be no more sadness, mourning. There won't be any of that. There won't be any crying. There won't be any pain. You won't have arthritis anymore. The old order of things have passed away. And if you have this mental fight in your mind over and over again, things that are pulling you down, they'll be gone. The anxiety that we sometimes have, no more. Because there's a new heaven and there's a new earth and our life has changed completely and totally. No more pain, no more crying. All of those things have passed away.

See, Len passed away. But now he receives this magnificent reward and he waits for us. Like for many of us, our parents wait for us. Loved ones wait for us. When it's our turn, it's our turn. But we'll be with the Lord and our loved ones again. And then he says, he who is sitting on the throne is telling us, "I am making everything new." And then he says this, because in case we might forget, write it down. Write this down. These words are trustworthy and true.

And he said, "It's done. I'm the first and last, the beginning and the end. To him who's thirsty, I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this. And I will be his God. He will be our son and daughter." What God gives us is absolutely incredible. May we enjoy it every day. Amen.

Closing

I received a note for some additional prayers. Gordon [from] Vandeleur is not doing very well. He has a blockage and is not able to eat very well. So request for prayers for him. He's lost a lot of weight and Kathy from Owen Sound had a fall down a flight of stairs and is waiting to go to London for spinal surgery. So I will mention them in the prayer.

Thank you, Don, for reminding us how fear could not reign in our lives, but instead comfort and assurance. And it reminded me of a passage in John. I'll just read that before we pray. A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered east to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my father is with me. I've told you these things that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart. I have overcome the world. When he spoke about us overcoming, here's Jesus close to his own death promising to overcome and to leave them with peace. Let's go to God in prayer.

Father, we have a couple of special requests for healing for Gordon that his body will be able to take sustenance, that he will again regain some of his strength. Father, it is our prayer that he would be raised up to continue the work he does at Vandeleur and for Kathy, that you would make way for her to be able to come to London and to the surgeons that can help her. We pray for that to happen quickly and for healing to happen. Father, today we rejoice in the promises that your son saw so clearly, even at the end of his life, because he had experienced it and he was here to help us to experience it. Thank you, Father, that we need not fear, that we are safe in your arms. Help us while we are here to spread that message to others, that you are a loving and kind Father and that you want nothing more than to spend eternity with us. Father, bless us that we may be a blessing. In the name of the Father, the Son who came to save us and the Spirit who lives within us. Amen.

Contact & Copyright

Thanks for watching or listening. The Beamsville Church of Christ meets at 4900 John Street, Beamsville, Ontario.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version© NIV© Copyright © 1973 1978 1984 2011 by Biblica, Inc. TM Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked AMP taken from the Amplified® Bible (AMP), Copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. <https://www.lockman.org>

You can learn more about the congregation on our Facebook page or at BeamsvilleChurchOfChrist.ca.