

2nd Sunday in Last Time- Saints Triumphant
November 13, 2016
Farewell to the Old Days
Isaiah 65:17-25
Rev. George Ferch

Fellow-Redeemed,

Who doesn't like to reminisce about the "old days?" The old days when we were poor but happy; the old days in high school and college while we grew up; the old days when you were single and your pockets always lined with cash never seem far below the surface of memory.

In retrospect, we may have to admit that the "old days" really weren't always as we recalled. Recollection can be downright wrong. Think of the Israelites remembering the "old days" in Egypt. Or, the Jews who told Jesus, "We have never been slaves to anyone."

Forget the old days and enjoy today. This is most certainly true of heaven. Eternal life, already ours through faith in Jesus Christ as we heard on Reformation Sunday, is a timeless today void of the past's loss and sadness. In the Church Triumphant we saints will possess the completion of our redemption when our bodies rise apart from the influence and damage of sin. There will be not the vaguest memory of the old days.

The Lord calls our hearts and minds in prophetic utterance to bid **Farewell to the Old Days**. The former things will not be remembered. God will create new heavens and a new earth. Those two things are tied intimately together.

The Lord revealed to Isaiah's prophetic eyes the day the promised Savior would deliver his people from the burden and pain of sin. That day would come at the Savior's birth, the genesis of the New Testament era. It would come again when the Lord destroys this world and the universe as we know it now, and creates "*new heavens and a new earth.*"

The first is prelude to the second. In both, the former things will not be remembered. How can God say that as we live today? We remember the tragic and sudden deaths of young and old. We remember experiencing injustice. We recall working hard only to hand the material fruits of our labors over to someone else. And who can forget that Jerusalem is a city no longer a delight and glory to the Lord but the home of two major heathen religions and unceasing tension and conflict? King Solomon had it right; all is vanity in this life.

God showed Isaiah the Church, the community of saints, first triumphant in the blood sacrifice of God's holy Lamb, Jesus Christ. We can't recall the old days when we were conceived and born in sin because God has washed us clean in the waters of our holy baptism. We do not remember the sins of our youth because God does not remember them. God's love for us in Christ has taken our sins and their guilt and dropped them into the depths of the sea.

God says, "The former things will not be remembered nor will they come to mind." When an infant lives only a few days, or parents do not live out long lives we do not remember the loss of them as a horror. In the midst of our grief and loss, we know they are with the Lord according to his gracious promise. In the part of Christ's church already triumphant those things never will happen again.

Now we work hard in the sweat of our brow, and others sometimes take the fruits of our labors. Our children suffer misfortune. Yet through all of these we are triumphant in faith. We know these things are only temporary and empty. We do not remember those things with regret or with a grudge that must be repaid. We look back on them as opportunities to serve our Lord with our gifts and accept the outcome according to his plan to work for our good. That is our triumph over them in Christ.

We bid farewell to the old ways of our own sins and the consequences of those sins because God has forgiven all of our sins in Jesus Christ. We are saints triumphant already although we continue to fight in the Church Militant until God carries out our second deliverance from this old heaven and earth. This is what our celebration today is about.

The Lord showed Isaiah the day of the New Testament Church, and the eternal life we have in that church in its fullest measure of joy, peace, and permanence. God will create new heavens and a new earth.

The Bible speaks a couple of times about God creating new heavens and a new earth. He will create a New Jerusalem that will be a delight. Its people will be a joy for it will be the home only of the holy, Christian Church, the communion of saints

Rather than spend our time in conjecture about what our lives will be like in the Church Triumphant, we concentrate on what the Lord has revealed about those glorious, timeless, perfect days.

“The former things will not be remembered.” No thought of the difficulties or losses or sins of this former life will come to mind. The New Jerusalem will be the radiant capital of the heavenly kingdom. “The sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more.” No enemy will storm her gates, or knock down her walls, or shed the blood of God’s people in her streets. Babies will not die in the womb either in miscarriage or by abortion. They will not die because of illness or accident after living only a few days. We will not age over a certain number of days and then die. A hundred years will be like an instant.

Nothing will be able to rob us of anything we have in heaven. Isaiah compares the days of our lives in heaven “as the days of a tree.” Isaiah most likely is referring to the strength and permanence of the tree to survive in Israel. Think of the California redwoods that have stood strong for countless years against all the elements.

In the new heavens and new earth our labors for the Lord will not be in vain. We will long enjoy the work of our hands. Our children will not be “doomed to misfortune.” That day will be the perfection of what God’s already does with our prayers, “Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.”

As Thanksgiving and Christmas approach people do lots of baking and candy making. When adding a flavor to the mix, you only have to put in a drop or two. That is like the flavor drops of joy and peace and permanence we have as saints living in the New Testament Church. We have those flavors along with many other flavors, some quite bitter.

In heaven, it will be like the whole bottle of flavoring. It is concentrated, pure, overwhelming in its power. Our lives in heaven will be joy, peace and permanence without the bitter tastes of sorrow, fear and the temporary. We will have that “for they will be a people blessed by the Lord, they and their descendants with them.”

We will have to wait till the trumpet sounds and Christ the King returns in glory for the time “the wolf and the lamb will feed together and the lion will eat straw with the ox and

dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain."

We do not have to wait to be saints living under the banner of the gospel of Jesus Christ. On that banner is the bloody Lamb who was nailed to the cross and is now sitting on his throne in heaven waiting to come for us. One day soon he will come in the final action begun with a promise in Eden and fulfilled on a cross outside the old Jerusalem.

When Jesus comes for us, that will be the day when we saints will join those already triumphant. On the mountain of the LORD in the New Jerusalem, we will not build houses and have others live in them. We will not plant vineyards and see others eat their fruit. Farewell, old days! Come, Lord Jesus, come! Amen. <SDG>