



Valley Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Dear Friend in Christ,

I am happy to share with you the final week of our autumn sermon series “The Whatabouts: Responding to Questions with Faithfulness” before we end the current church year and transition into the seasons of Advent and Christmas. Today’s whatabout question is, appropriately enough for the conclusion of a sermon series, “What About the End Times Mania?” We’ll work on trying to better understand some of the imagery in Revelation as we unpack how and why Christianity came to be associated with apocalypticism, and how far removed we are from John of Patmos’s original context in writing Revelation.

Please use following phone numbers and links between 10:15am and 10:30am. You can join in one of two ways:

By computer, smart phone or tablet:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86757133623?pwd=OTFUQWJvU21MMmR6bkY5SitpelR1UT09>

By Phone: 1 (312) 626 6799 ID 867 5713 3623, Passcode 205879

(If you need a live link to the Worship link, you can go to the homepage of our website at www.vccbhm.org with the passcode 205879 OR click on “Links to Zoom” then the Sunday Worship link.)

I look forward to seeing you on Sunday.

Christ’s and yours,
Pastor Eric

Valley Christian Church

Twenty-Fifth Sunday After Pentecost

November 22, 2020

PRELUDE

"We Gather Together"

Margaret Cox
Pianist

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship Him day and night within His temple.

People: The one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

Leader: They will hunger no more and thirst no more. The sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

People: For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd.

Leader: He will guide them to springs of the water of life.

People: And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Whitney Devine
Worship Leader

(Revelation 7:15-17, NRSV)

HYMN OF PRAISE

"Rejoice, the Lord is King"

*Rejoice, the Lord is King, the risen Christ adore
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing, and triumph evermore
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice*

*God's reign can never fail, Christ rules o'er earth & heaven
The keys of death and hell are to our Jesus given
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice*

*Rejoice in glorious hope, for Christ our Judge shall come
To glorify the saints for their eternal home
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice*

INVOCATION

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

Whitney Devine
Worship Leader

PASTORAL PRAYER

Almighty God, you hear our every prayer. Even when the answer may not be what we immediately want, we trust in you because we know that you are always present alongside us, ready to guide and equip us to live as your children. We remember your children whom we have named and lift up to you as we repeat their names at this time...

Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

SCRIPTURE

Revelation 13:11-18

Whitney Devine
Worship Leader

MEDITATION

"The Whatabouts: What About the End Times Mania?"
See Insert for Meditation

Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

HYMN

"Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah"

*Guide me O thou great Jehovah
Pilgrim in this barren land
I am weak but thou art mighty
Hold me with thy powerful hand
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven
Feed me til I want no more, feed me til I want no more*

*Open now the crystal fountain
Whence the healing waters flow
Let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey thru
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer
Be thou still my strength and shield
Be thou still my strength and shield*

*When I tread the verge of Jordan
Bid my anxious fears subside
Bear me through the swelling current
Land me safe on Canaan's side
Songs of praises, songs of praises I will ever give to thee
I will ever give to thee*

SHARING OUR OFFERING WITH GOD

Share your financial offering with the church by mail or bring it by the church office. Thank you for your love gifts.

Whitney Devine
Worship Leader

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Whitney Devine
Worship Leader

**CALL TO
COMMUNION**

May we remember how this meal strengthened Jesus for His future, and may it strengthen us for our future. *Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson*

**COMMUNION
HYMN**

"Shall We Gather at the River"

*Shall we gather at the river where bright angel feet did trod
With its crystal tide forever flowing by the throne of God*

(Refrain)

*Yes we'll gather at the river, the beautiful the beautiful river
Gather with the saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God*

*On the margin of the river, washing up its silver spray
We will walk and worship ever, all the happy golden day
Refrain*

*Ere we reach the shining river, lay we every burden down
Grace our spirits will deliver and provide a robe and crown
Refrain*

**COMMUNION
PRAYER**

Conclude by praying together the Lord's Prayer *Carolyn Nunnelly
Elder*

**HOLY
COMMUNION**

Partake of the holy communion (bread, juice, or whatever is available to you)

**WORDS OF
INSTITUTION**

Hear the words of Jesus when He said, "Take and eat, this is my body, broken for you. Take and drink, this is the cup of the covenant poured out for you." *Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson*

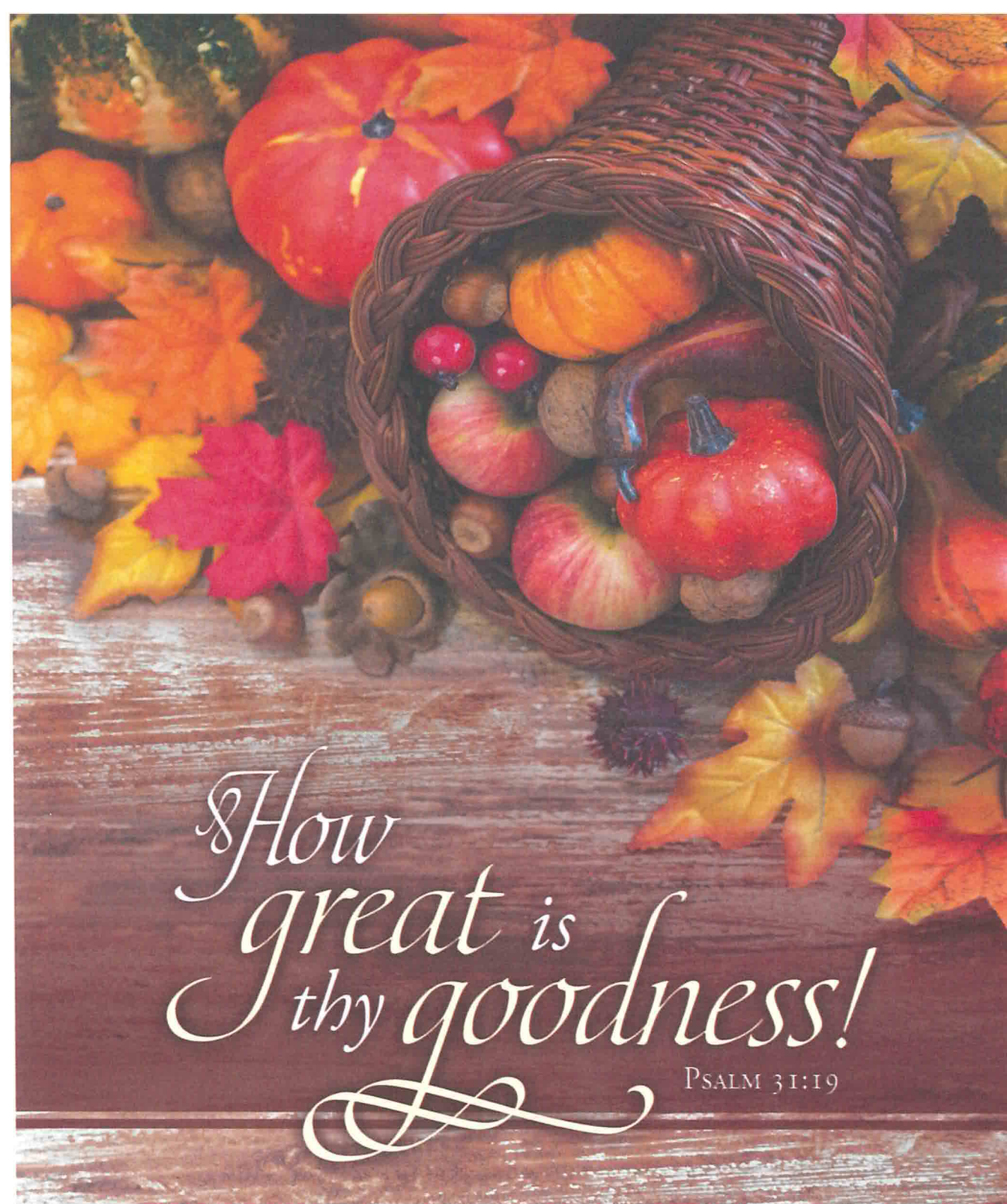
BENEDICTION

May the God who has led you this far lead you into the future, whatever it may be, for you to impact it for good as much as you are able, and may the blessing of that God be with you on this day and on all days. Amen. *Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson*

POSTLUDE

"For the Beauty of the Earth" *Margaret Cox Pianist*

You are warmly invited to remain in our Zoom worship space for some online fellowship time following the postlude.



*How
great is
thy goodness!*

PSALM 31:19

MEDITATION

Sunday, November 22, 2020

“What About the End Times Mania?” Revelation 13:11-18

“The Whatabouts: Responding to Questions with Faithfulness,” Week Eleven

The churchmen had gathered from across Europe, North Africa, and West Asia in response to the Pope Julius II’s long-anticipated creation of the Fifth Council of the Lateran, the last attempt at reform in western Christendom before Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation in 1517.

Over the course of five years, the Fifth Lateran Council proclaimed a number of recommendations, some of them blatantly incendiary, like the launching of a new Holy Land crusade, and some that seem like no-brainers today, like demanding core competencies in preaching of the church’s clergy.

But my favorite by far is their recommendation that us pastors “are in no way to presume to preach or declare a fixed time for future evils, the coming of (the) antichrist, or the precise day of judgment; for Truth says, it is not for us to know times or seasons which (God) has fixed by (God’s) own authority. Let it be known that those who have dared to declare such things are liars.”

Basically, the Fifth Council of the Lateran shouted at the clergy, “Stop trying to predict the End Times, because y’all really, *really* bad at it!” Five hundred years ago, they were having the same problem of people getting their End Times predictions horribly wrong, so much so that the church had to ban it! A churchwide ban is usually not called for unless that thing is already a huge problem!

Fast forward over five hundred years, though, and it would seem little has changed. I told you several weeks ago about how one particular End Times televangelist had snookered an older relative of mine for thousands of dollars until my family finally put a stop to it. Literally dozens of major Christian movements have, since the Fifth Lateran Council, tried to predict the End Times, and they have batted a straight .000 so far. Yet their appeal continues, and sometimes tags us by association.

This sermon series is my first as your new minister here at Valley, but we arrive at the end of it today, after ten previous questions that I’ve had come up in sharing my faith. Specifically what I heard from Valley’s search and call team concerning sharing one’s faith was a need to be equipped to talk to people about faith in a way that could answer

their questions—questions to which we may or may not have all the answers, or not feel comfortable answering.

The way I experienced doing evangelism on the West Coast would sometimes come in the form of fielding questions from folks skeptical of the nature of my faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ, and I came to think of those questions as “the whatabouts,” as in, “Well, what about...?” Being honest in those moments was vital for my own integrity and for my friendship with the person asking me. I crafted this sermon series to tackle many of these questions a way for me to share with you what evangelism has looked to me and in my ministry, by trying to answer those whatabout questions, and as a way to let you into my own theology and faith. I hope that has happened for you.

Our final whatabout question is, “What about the End Times mania?” Sometimes it gets posed as a “What do you think of the Christians who are really loudly into that?” and sometimes it gets posed as “What do you, personally, believe about the End Times?” Either way, the question may not be the easiest or most comfortable for you to answer, and I think a lot of that comes down to how difficult an apocalyptic book like Revelation is to interpret. It is okay for us to admit the difficulty in interpreting something like Revelation, because there is no such thing as a simple read of it, much as we might wish that there were. But if over five hundred years of various church leaders getting it wrong so far is any indication, we should not fault ourselves for not having a simple answer to a very difficult and complicated question.