

## We Haven't Seen Anything Yet!

I Corinthians 2:1-12 & Matthew 5:13-20

Saint Paul's Memorial United Methodist Church

1001 W Colfax Ave, South Bend, Indiana 46616

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### 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. <sup>2</sup> For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. <sup>3</sup> I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. <sup>4</sup> My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

<sup>6</sup> We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. <sup>7</sup> No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

<sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup> However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him"—<sup>10</sup> but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup> For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

### Matthew 5:13-20 (NIV)

<sup>13</sup> "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. <sup>14</sup> You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

<sup>17</sup> "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

### We Haven't Seen Anything Yet!

When some future scholar tries to understand the spirit of our times, he or she might run across a collection of the many derivatives of Murphy's Law and declare that they constitute our national spirit. We have become such a pessimistic people.

Murphy's Law, of course, goes like this: "If anything can go wrong, it will. If nothing can go wrong, it will anyway." But there are many derivatives of that Law, like:

"Which ever line one chooses to get in, the other line will always moves faster." Or "When one wishes to unlock a door, but only has one hand free, the keys are always in the opposite pocket." Or "The probability of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich falling on the carpet face side up is inversely proportional to the cost of the carpet." Or "After discarding something not used for years, you will need it one week later."

Murphy's Law is amply illustrated in a joke about a man who was crawling through the desert on his hands and knees, desperate for a drink of water. He encounters a man selling neckties. "Would you like to buy a nice tie?" the salesman asks. "What would I want with a necktie?" the man growls. "All I want is a drink of water." The salesman has no water, so the poor man keeps crawling across the sand.

Miraculously, out in the middle of that vast desert, he comes upon a beautiful restaurant. At first he thinks it's a mirage, but as he moves closer he sees that it is real. With his last ounce of energy he struggles up to the entrance of that beautiful restaurant and says to the doorman. "Please, I must have a drink of water." To which the doorman replies, "Sorry, gentlemen are not admitted without ties."

Poor guy! I have had days like that. You have too. How refreshing it is to come to God's Word and read this positive and uplifting message from St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him"

In other words, if your faith is in God, you haven't seen anything yet! We cannot even imagine all the good things that await us as followers of Jesus Christ. Isn't that refreshing news for your soul? I know it is for mine.

IT TELLS ME, FIRST OF ALL, THAT THE WONDROUS THINGS OF THIS WORLD ARE BUT A FORETASTE OF GREATER THINGS YET TO COME.

One reason we have difficulty imagining what the next world will be like is that it is impossible for us to imagine anything more beautiful than the world we already inhabit. A drive in the mountains, or a visit to an ocean, or gazing upon a lovely dew-covered flower as it lifts its colorful face toward the sun — how much more majestic can Heaven be?

I read of a little church in Ireland with beautiful stained-glass windows. It is said that the richness of the reds and blues in those windows is breathtaking. However, there is one window that has been left in clear glass. They say it is the most beautiful window of them all for it looks out over a panorama that

includes a clear-blue lake and rolling hills green. Under the window is this inscription: *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork.”*

No creation of human hands will ever compare to the majestic creation in which God has placed us.

Dorothy Gardner in *Eastward in Eden* put it like this: “Sometimes, when I am working in my garden, when the day is hot and still, I am transported to another world. The hum of bees seems like singing wires from Eternity. It is as though a message were trying to come through and I know what it means, but I can’t hear the words.... I like to think my garden is Eden, but I know it is only evidence of Eden.”

The beauty and glory of this world are but a foretaste of the wondrous things that await us in heaven. Even more important, the love of our family and friends is but a pale shadow of the love God has for us. Can you get your mind around that? The most beautiful music of this world would not hold a light to the music of Heaven’s choir. Everything we count in this world as good is but an inferior imitation of that which we will one day experience in God’s kingdom.

Many of you exercise and take great care of your bodies. Take some time and read I Corinthians 15 concerning the new body that will one day be given to the believer. If you marvel at the wonder of the physical, wait until you behold the spiritual! That is what St. Paul is saying to us.

We are told that the artist John Linnell was very sensitive about friends wanting to see a masterpiece he was working on before it was finished. He feared that someone might come into his studio in his absence and sneak a look, so whenever he was out of the room, he covered the easel with a veil. Across the veil he threw a streamer bearing this inscription: “Wait and see.”

That is St. Paul’s word for us, “Wait and see.” The magnificence of that which surrounds us gives us only a foretaste of that which awaits us.

THAT IS WHY FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST ANTICIPATE THE FUTURE WITH SUCH EAGERNESS.

Whether it be the anticipation of Christ’s return or the prospect of Heaven, to be a Christian is by definition to anticipate the future with a joyful heart. St. Paul is saying to us that no matter how good things are in this world, we haven’t seen anything yet!

We modern, intellectually sophisticated believers do not have to apologize for that anticipation. The Christian faith does not make sense, nor does life in general make sense, nor does our belief in a loving God make sense without belief in a world beyond this one.

Much beloved Episcopal Bishop Warren Chandler lay dying. A close friend sat by his bedside. “Please tell me frankly,” said his friend, “do you dread crossing the river of death?” The old bishop

smiled weakly and said with conviction, “My Father owns the land on both sides of the river. Why should I be afraid?”

I love the beautiful and heartwarming affirmation of the world to come that was found once in the cartoon, *The Family Circus*. Little Billy and his father are looking at a tombstone. Billy’s imagination takes over and he pictures a hole with the casket in it. He sadly says to his father, “Daddy, is Grandad still down there in that dark ol’ grave?” His father says, “Not really, Billy. The real Grandad went on to meet his old friends and family.”

Once again, Billy’s imagination takes over and he sees Grandad, cane and all, walking up to the “Pearly Gates,” with a large crowd waiting for him. Grandad hears words of welcome: “Elizabeth!” a voice shouts, “Al’s here!” Another voice says, “Look who just showed up. Al! It’s good to see you again. Come on in and join the old crowd.” And Billy smiles from ear to ear!

For some people such faith sounds too much like “Pie in the sky by and by.” My heart goes out to them. They have missed the most joyous good news of our faith. Belief in a loving God demands a completion to an incomplete universe. As St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:19, “If for this life only have we hoped in Christ, we are of all [people] most to be pitied.”

For now we enjoy a foretaste. We anticipate the future.

AND WE CLING TO OUR FAITH.

The Greek philosopher Plato taught that we live in a world that is but a shadow of a better world. For Plato the physical world is the best evidence there is of the existence of a spiritual world. That is an appealing argument, but it was not sufficient for St. Paul. Paul knew that reason alone, evidence alone, argument alone could not bring a person to God. Therefore he did not say that this world is evidence for a better one. He said faith is the best evidence we have of a better world.

He said, “...FAITH is the assurance (or evidence) of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.... By FAITH, we understand that the world was created by God . . .” Paul makes that clear in our text when he says that it is only by the Spirit of God that we can come to know God.

In other words, our anticipation grows out of our faith and not visa versa. Because we have met the One who holds the future in His mighty hand, we can live in joy and anticipation. “Because He lives, we can live.” That is true in this world, and the world to come. If we hang in there with our faith in Christ intact, we shall see the salvation of our God.

Patt Barnes discovered this truth through an old flower lady. She relates that one Easter Sunday morning she noticed the old lady sitting in her usual place inside a small archway.

At her feet corsages and boutonnieres were displayed on top of a spread-open newspaper. The flower lady was smiling, her wrinkled old face alive with some inner joy and on impulse Patt said to her, “My, you look happy this morning!” “Why not?” the flower lady answered. “Everything is good.”

The flower lady was dressed so shabbily and seemed so very old that Patt couldn’t help asking, “Don’t you have any troubles?” “You can’t reach my age and not have troubles,” she replied. “Only it’s like Jesus and Good Friday. When Jesus was crucified on Good Friday that was the worst day for the whole world. When I get troubles, I remember that, and then I think of what happened only three days later — Easter and our Lord arising. So when things go wrong, I’ve learned to wait three days — and somehow everything gets much better.”

Patt Barnes goes on to write, “[The old flower lady] smiled good-by. But her words still follow me whenever I think I have troubles... Give God a chance to help.... wait three days.”

That sounds like good advice to me. Doesn’t it to you? Each moment spent in the love and care of God is a moment of eternity. We do not have to wait until we cross the river of death to experience God’s love and God’s beauty.

The wondrous things of this world are but a foretaste of greater things to come. Thus we anticipate the future with eagerness. In the meantime, we cling to our faith.

Someone has imagined that once an enormous computer was built by all the world’s greatest scientists. Into that computer was fed all of the world’s knowledge. Then the computer was asked this question, “How did the world really come into existence?”

The computer ground for hours on that question as all the great scientists hovered around it. Finally it printed out a short, succinct answer: “See Genesis 1, verse 1.” In case you’ve forgotten, Genesis 1 begins like this: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

I believe if we were to ask the same computer the question, “What does the future hold?” that giant computer would print out I Corinthians 2, verse 9: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.”

In other words, friends, for those of us who love Jesus, “We haven’t seen anything yet.”

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