

Love Makes All Things New

(Preached by Cheryl Williams at FBC on May 18th, 2025 – Revelation 21:1-6 & John 13:31-35)

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I want this morning to introduce you to a couple of Japanese arts.

The first is Kintsugi and the second is Boro stitching.

Kintsugi is an art form that takes broken pieces of pottery and fixes them or remakes them with gold, making something that would be discarded into a stronger and more valuable vessel and often making it more valuable. It takes the rough edges and cracks and fills them with gold. I am astounded by the beauty of this art form, where we find a newly imagined and distinctive vessel and I would argue that it has become more beautiful. On the screen you can see some examples of these art from.



Boro stitching does something similar but with fabric. It is a textile art that focuses on repairing and repurposing fabrics to extend their lifespan and create unique, layered garments or textiles. It involves patching and mending worn areas of fabric with scrap cloth, often using a running stitch to patch and reinforce the fabric, it actually makes it stronger. It creates a new thing out of the old, celebrating what it has been, creating something new and gives it a new strength. I have a sample here for you to take and have a look at.

Both of our bible readings today speak of new things. Revelation 21 speaks of a new heaven and earth and reminds us that God is making all things new. John speaks of a new way of being, of operating, a new commandment of love.

There are many of the same kind of images in both our readings today that it is not unreasonable to think the same person wrote both passages.

Before we go too far, just a few words and cautions about how we should read and understand the book of Revelation.

The book of Revelation was written by John about 90 years after the death of Jesus, when he was exiled on the island of Patmos which is off the border of modern-day Turkey. It is a letter that was written to group of churches around Ephesus. He is writing to churches that are powerless and suffering at the hand of the Roman power. For the next two hundred years and more the Christians would be in conflict with the Roman state. The letter is full of symbols and is what we call apocalyptic literature. **It is not to be taken literally.** He writes the letter to encourage the readers in their time of suffering. It is a message of hope to them. It is important to note that John understands that the victory has already been won in the death and resurrection of Jesus, this victory is in the past not in the future.

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So, let's look more closely at the vision of hope we have before us from Revelation 21.

- A new heaven and a new earth and the sea was no more. The sea in John's time symbolised evil and darkness. So, in his image of hope, evil and darkness are no more. A really important message of hope, to those who are suffering at the hands of evil.
- The new Jerusalem – this is an image of the church.
- God's home is among the people, with the people - recalling perhaps a number of images we find in John's gospel – the incarnation where God pitches his tent amongst the people and the image of abiding. God comes to us, not we go to God. What a picture of love, a picture where all of existence is surrounded by the presence of God.
- I am making all things new, not, I am making new things. In John's vision we find a God who doesn't simply replace all that is broken, instead like a Japanese artist working with broken pottery, God gathers up what is broken and makes it new again.
- It is done, I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. God is referred to in the Hebrew Bible as the great I AM, which translates to, I am who I am and I will be who I will be. How often in John's gospel have heard Jesus say I am – the good shepherd, the way, the truth and the life, the bread of life, the true vine, the light of the world, the door, the resurrection. Here we see a God who gathers the broken, transforms them and is with them for all time.
- Finally, to the thirsty will be given water from the spring of the water of life. In John's gospel we see this image a couple of times – the woman at the well, where Jesus tells her to come to him and find the water that leads to eternal life. In Chapter 7, Jesus invites those who are thirsty to come to him and drink, meaning come and receive the Spirit. As an aside the day before my mother died, I asked her if she was thirsty - she simply replied, no Jesus was with her and giving her water. There was a sense in which she knew, despite her pain, that God was with her, making all things new.

John was giving his readers and us a wonderful image and hope. Many years ago, Archbishop David Penman said to me as we discussed the book of Revelation, that instead of getting caught up in trying to interpret the words in all kinds of ways, instead of worrying about what all the numbers mean or symbols symbolise, I should note the main message is that it will all pan out in the end. This is what John is telling us, that God will be with us always, not just in the future but in the now.

God is doing a new thing. God is always transforming us because God always loves us, God is always doing a new thing.

Our call as the church is also to be doing a new thing, and Jesus shows us how. Love. Jesus exhorts the disciples to love one another as he has loved them.

What kind of love is this? Love that is gracious, generous, forgiving, extravagant and active. It is this kind of love that will change things, that will turn things around, that

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will renew all things. Love will always change things. Love can transform tears into joy. Love can stop the pain and suffering that we cause each other in its tracks. Love will transfigure brokenness and pain.

May we too gather up what is broken around us, gather it up and transform it into something new.

Love will make all things new. Amen.