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The Raging Sea

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“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isaiah 65:1). *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”* (Revelation 21:1).

I simply love the way our lectionary is put together for Morning Prayer. Through the combined readings of Old Testament Scripture with New Testament revelations we come to understand God not as a God of past things, but of a God who is on the move now with more yet to come. The first verses of both readings today smack of action. In the first part a prophetic statement of a cataclysmic event and in the second a prophetic vision documenting the transpiring of the first. When we look at all the Old Testament prophecies that found their fulfillment in the new, we cannot deny, based on our readings this morning, a future day when the heavens and the earth will be made new and life will be as it was intended...this alone should give us hope and strength to endure this transitory life that lacks the refreshment offered by John's vision in the book of Revelation. Yes, I said refreshment and you say...what refreshment? Yes, the book of Revelation is full of torment and destruction, plague and pestilence, death and the gnashing of teeth. So you ask, “where is the refreshment?” The question is valid. John's revelations are petrifying and heart wrenching...but not for those who are the children of God, not for those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and walk in His light. For us the book of Revelation gives us hope; *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; **and there was no more sea.**”* There was no more sea! Are we to believe that all the waters will be dried up in the new earth? Weren't the seas part of God's Creation? Maybe there is something more allegorical going on here.

We sang the Venite just a few moments ago and in one of the lines we sang, *“The sea is his, and he made it, and his hands prepared the dry ground.”* How many of you knew that this verse is from psalm 95? If you investigate the scriptures that speak of the sea you begin to realize

that the sea tells the story of man's relationship with God. The sea becomes symbolic of a turbulent world and the unsettled existence of mankind. The sea can be seen as representative of the sins of the world trying to crash down and erode the landscape of mankind. Allegorically the sea can be seen as sin itself. In Ezekiel 26 it is the deep sea that symbolizes God's judgment on Edom where the great waters will cover sinners and drag them to the pit. And Isaiah tells us *"the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud"* (Isaiah 57:20). The sea was used in God's judgment of mankind in Genesis when the Earth was all but destroyed except for 8 souls who found favor with God and remained safe inside the ark; the ark which is symbolic of Jesus Christ. Prophetically this too is an allegory, an allegory of salvation found in Jesus Christ as we navigate the waters of sin. And again in the Exodus from Egypt, God's chosen walked through the Red Sea on DRY ground while the disobedient were consumed to their watery graves by a crashing sea. For any of you who have been on the ocean you know that it is a scary experience when you look into the deep and feel the immense power it holds in wait...in wait for its chance to act. Like a boat on the ocean we too are surrounded by a great force that has the ability to consume us if we do not remain in the safety of the ship. The sea takes life without regard and beats on the dry ground without mercy... But, all is not lost if the company is true (Lord of the Rings). Knowing all this, is it the sea we should fear? It would seem so...but, it is not so.

"Do you not fear Me?" declares the LORD 'Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, (the dry ground) An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; (sin holds no power of those protected in the body of Christ) Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it" (Jeremiah 5:22). Sin does not trample over the body of Christ! We should be shaking in our shoes! It is not the sea we should fear but the One who is able to control and contain the sea. *"He caused the storm to be still, so that the waves of the sea were hushed"* (Psalm 107:29). He *"divided the sea before them, so they passed through the midst of the sea on dry ground; (Jesus Christ) and their pursuers He hurled into the depths, like a stone into raging waters"* (Nehemiah 9:11). And on a boat, in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus said to them, *"Why are you afraid, you men of little*

faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm" (Matthew 8:26).

"And there was no sea." From this perspective we see, that John's vision in Revelation, does not concern itself with water, but with sin. In a new heaven and a new earth sin will not have a place, there will no longer be a basis for sin and it shall dry up and be no more. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4). And we will be left with a new heaven and a new earth symbolic of the new Church that will rise from the dust of the earth in perfect unity with Christ; As we ascend, the new Jerusalem descends as we meet our creator in the skies where spirit will unite with spirit in perfect harmony.

Sin is dried up and we are a new creation in Christ; for as Christ has Ascended so then shall we. Sin will no longer be a variable and our relationship with Christ will be made complete. This ascension of ours is only made possible by the ascension of Jesus Christ. Without His ascension Christ would have either had to die again or be walking the earth now as a 2,000-year-old God-man. It is in His ascension that we find hope in our own bodily resurrections. St. Gregory of Nazianzus made a declaration at the synod of Alexandria in 362 that was accepted at the Council of Constantinople in 381. His statement was simple; he claimed that only that can be saved in man which has been assumed by Christ. Christ was fully divine and fully human without mixture of these two natures and he ascended with both natures intact. We therefore can be confident that we too will be ascended with Christ in Spirit and in body. It is St. Paul that puts it best I think: *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins (the sea), hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together (our ascension, the rapture of the church), and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:4-6).

"The sea is his and He made it..." Jesus Christ is in control and keeps at bay the sea of sin that overcomes the rest of the world. We are safe in the Ark of God who is Jesus Christ, the door being sealed by the blood of the Lamb. And so...fail not in the continuance of your prayers...they

provide safe passage through stormy seas. Fail not in works of goodwill...for your edification of Christ will provide direction through the slippery currents of life. And refuse not the Table of our Lord...were you will gain the grace of God to battle the storms of life.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.