

The Story: The End of Time

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 May 2020

Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0 : 00] Good morning. Welcome to our live service on Facebook this morning. My name is Pastor Kent Dixon. I'm the lead pastor of Braemar Baptist Church here in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

And it's a joy for me to be with you in this way, in this place this morning. So welcome. Welcome to people who are from our church and attend regularly.

And welcome to people who are watching or listening to this service from wherever you may be listening, likely from the comfort of your home. So welcome. It's interesting. So in this time of the reality of what it means to be a pastor right now, I am connected with other pastors across North America, in our own city, by phone, email, people on Facebook that I talk to periodically.

And here's an interesting reality that I'll share with you this morning. A pastor mentioned that he was doing a service like this on Facebook this morning earlier, and had someone in the comments on his sermon during the service say to him periodically, I can't find which smoke detector in my house is making the battery is dying beeping sound. So this poor person was listening to the pastor's sermon. And at the same time, navigating around their house trying to find this annoying beeping sound.

Well, the pastor discovered at the end of the service that he was recording in the church and it was a smoke detector in the church that had been beeping. So there's a funny reality. Something else that's happened this morning is Zoom, which is an application that a lot of pastors all over the world are using to interact with people right now, to do their sermons, do their services and other ways of interacting with people during the week.

[1 : 54] Zoom, that application, that program was having problems this morning, just because of the volume of people using it. And so that caused a lot of pastors some stress, I'm sure, this morning.

And there are a lot of congregations who may not have been able to do their online services like we are this morning. And so, you know, the fact that I'm using Facebook meant that we didn't have issues this morning.

However, I did have issues with my camera and my microphone that I don't normally have. So fortunately, I was up early this morning and I had a chance to kind of troubleshoot.

And God has given me some of those skills as well. So but I'll tell you, that sure adds an extra layer of stress and unexpected things that can happen to you as you're pastoring online.

So just sharing that with you this morning, that that's the reality of what it is to do this right now. During this time, you know, it's we're we're having our sermon series in the story.

[2 : 58] And I was reflecting this morning. So many of us probably have stories that we are accumulating now stories of things that have happened to us or challenges that have happened.

And so I encourage you to lean into those things and and listen to what God may be telling you. I have a story from the last few months. I fell 13 feet off a ladder a couple of weeks ago.

So fortunately, didn't break anything. But that's reality. Lots of us will have these stories to tell that that have changed us or have strengthened us or just silly.

So I encourage you to remember those stories and and really use them as a way to reflect on what you're experiencing in this time and maybe how God is speaking to you.

So this morning, I want to start by reading Psalm 8 to us. Psalm 8. Psalm 8.

[4 : 19] So I want you to remember during this time when you maybe feel forgotten that God has not forgotten you.

God is with you. God is with all of us. And God, as I've been saying throughout these past few weeks and months, God is still in control. Let's pray. Father God, thank you that we can recognize that you are in control, that none of this is a surprise to you.

And yet, Father, we recognize that we are struggling. We we don't know what to expect. We don't know what's going to change from day to day and even moment to moment. But Lord, we recognize that we can return to you, that we can lay our worries and fears at your feet and that you will carry them for us.

So, Lord, in your grace, in your kindness, in your love for us, you've shown us that we are not alone. We are not insignificant. And through the words of the psalmist, you've told us that you've placed us so high in your creation, so high on your radar for love and care.

And so, Lord, as we conclude our sermon series in the story this morning, again, we see you at work throughout human history, throughout our story, throughout the story of humanity, as our story is intimately interwoven with yours.

[5 : 49] So, Father, we also recognize that there are people now who are struggling. Lord, we know that there are people who work in frontline care and frontline service.

And as restrictions for meeting under the pandemic are relaxed, restrictions for gathering and going to restaurants and other places, Lord, we pray for safety for the people who are serving in those roles, whether it be health care or other service.

And, Lord, we pray for protection for people who are out and about. And, Lord, we pray for wisdom. We pray for mindfulness of safety.

We pray for people to be aware of restrictions and guidelines, and that they would follow them not only for their own health and safety, but for the health and safety of others. Lord, we recognize that people have lost jobs.

People are looking for provision and help. Father, people are struggling with health issues and other concerns, with loneliness and feelings of isolation in this time.

[6 : 54] And so, Father, I pray for comfort on each one who is struggling, regardless of the nature of that struggle, Father. I pray that you'd bring comfort and peace, that you would bring provision and hope, as you always do.

And we pray these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. So, again, good morning and welcome to this sermon this morning broadcast on Facebook Live, people listening through our podcast and other channels.

There's information about our church included in the information in this post. So, if you'd like to connect with us, there's information there. And if you happen to be watching this morning and are on Facebook, give us a like, the little thumbs up.

Give us that, if you wouldn't mind, and then that will ensure that you're connected with us. And you'll know when we go live with these videos and some other things. So, please, I encourage you to do that.

Next Sunday and the week after, so the two Sundays following this one, we're going to have a guest speaker. And so, it'll be a real joy for me, I've been looking forward to this, to welcome a man named Dr. Randall Rauser.

[8 : 06] And Randall's going to be preaching a two-part sermon on Christian apologetics on May 24th and 31st. So, we planned this visit months ago, and so it's unfortunate that we can't welcome him in person, but I know that you'll enjoy his sermons very much, so I encourage you to tune in.

Dr. Rauser was my academic advisor during my master's journey at Taylor Seminary here in Edmonton. So, we got to know each other well, and I would even say that at this point, for both of us, we've become friends.

We enjoy each other's company, we enjoy challenging each other, and just sharing experiences of life together. So, again, he and I look forward to seeing each other in person as well.

Randall is a professor of apologetics, church history, and systematic theology at Taylor Seminary. He's also the author of many books on Christian theology and apologetics, and he's the author of a blog called The Tentative Apologist, which is a fun name, and it's a fantastic podcast.

You can learn more about Randall on his website, and his website is randallrauser.com. That's r-a-n-d-a-l, one l, rouser, r-a-u-s-e-r dot com.

[9 : 28] And the first part of Randall's sermon next week is titled, Does Christian Faith Mean Giving Up On Evidence? Does Christian Faith Mean Giving Up On Evidence?

And that sermon will look at how Jesus himself valued and modeled evidence and argument and debate. Jesus valued these things, so we shouldn't be afraid to engage in our faith in that way.

And the second part of that sermon on May 31st is titled, The Resurrection as Historical Miracle. And Randall will look at the historical evidence for the resurrection, and then give context for what that means for our faith and our lives.

So it's going to be a fantastic two-part journey with Dr. Randall Rouser. So not only was I privileged to have him as a professor, as I said, he and I have become good friends.

So please tune in for those two sermons over the next two Sundays. And that will be right here on Facebook at 11 a.m. Mountain Standard Time. And then we will publish it in other channels as well.

[10:38] So then for the month of June, I'm front-loading you with all kinds of information. For the month of June, we'll be looking at the concept of stewardship together. And stewardship is a big idea.

We're going to look at it first from the big idea perspective. What does stewardship mean? What does it mean in our lives? What does it mean in the context of Scripture? And then we're going to look at stewardship in the way it relates to our time, the way it relates to our talents, and the way it relates to our treasure or our belongings.

So I'm looking forward to unpacking that with you together over the next month for the month of June. And, you know, you may be thinking to yourself, well, stewardship, pastors have to talk about it, and it just means money.

You're not wrong. It does relate to money. It does relate to belongings. But it relates to so much more than that. It's such a rich concept in Scripture. And so I look forward to looking through that together.

And then, so this morning, we're coming to a conclusion. This morning, we recognize that on September 8th of this year, which feels like a million years ago, we began a journey together, a journey that ends in many ways this morning.

[11:59] September 8th of last year was our first sermon in our series on the story. And believe it or not, today is the last sermon in that series.

Congratulations, you survived. And I want to thank my friends and guest speakers, Noel Sayers, Luan Gumbling, Werner De Jong, and Howard Rittenhouse, for joining me on this journey as well. Because they preached some sermons in this series for us, and I'm grateful for them in coming along with me on this journey. And if you want to revisit the series, and if you missed any of the sermons along the way, you can do that on our website, at braemarbaptist.com, we have a sermon tab, and you can go there and find them.

Just search the story, and you'll see them all there. Or on our sermon called BraemarCast, which you can find on Apple Podcasts. So I teased this a bit at the beginning of this series, and I think many of you may have thought I was crazy so new, to be so new in my role as a pastor, and taking on a sermon series of 31, that would take us from September until May.

And to be honest with you, while I did feel very led to do this series, I do remember feeling a little bit overwhelmed, because it was so many, because it was over such a long period of time.

[13:34] Could I do it? Could we sustain it? Would people be interested in what we were talking about? And so here we are, and I think we've accomplished what we were looking for, and that's over the course of the last nine months, we've explored the story together.

We've looked at the Bible as one chronological narrative from Genesis to Revelation. We've seen God's upper story at work as he reveals himself to humanity, with the ultimate goal of drawing his children back to him, drawing all people back to him.

And we've learned how the lower story, the story of humanity, and as I've said before, the term lower story doesn't somehow mean inferior or invaluable, but the lower story meaning the human story, the earthly story.

Our humanity, our struggles, our triumphs, our challenges, all of those things are intimately interwoven with the upper story.

As I've said before over the course of the series, intimately interwoven with the upper story of God into a beautiful tapestry that God designed from the beginning and always intended and continues to weave day by day.

[14:56] We've seen that our God is gracious and loving, that he continues to pursue us even when we complain. And boy, do we complain, don't we? When we resist, we resist as well and choose our own will or our own path over God's perfect plans for our lives.

We do that over and over and over. And just like with any great story, I believe we've seen heroes and zeros.

We've seen good guys and bad guys and girls as they've both followed and opposed God's plan for humanity and restored relationship.

Over Christmas and Easter, we were reminded how the birth and death and resurrection and promised return of Jesus Christ became a game changer for all of creation.

Jesus paid the debt of human sin and bore the punishment that each of us deserve so that we would have the opportunity to come back into restored relationship with our Heavenly Father.

[16:10] Jesus made it possible that what previously had been impossible could happen. What was previously unattainable for us could come to be.

So here we are, the final chapter of the story and not surprisingly, the book of Revelation.

Revelation is the very last book of the Bible.

I want to tell you a bit of a story here. Are you familiar with the TV show Extreme Makeover? Some of you may be, some of you may not be.

I'll tell you a little bit about it. The show documents heartwarming stories of selfless but struggling and helpless families who need a home. These are really heart-wrenching stories.

The local community then, under the direction of the show's producers, rallies to build new homes for these needy families.

[17:16] Honestly, it's a show that will stir your heart and likely move your emotions. And by the end of the episode, a big bus is pulled in front of the new home and parked there.

And the families are brought out by their benefactors for what is called the big reveal. The house is on one side, the bus is there, the family is on the other, surrounded by the people who made it possible.

And everything builds to the moment at the end of the episode where everyone shouts, move that bus! The whole crowd shouts this.

And we see the overwhelming joy of the family as they see and enter into a new home that has been tailor-made for them to fit their needs, to answer their deepest desires.

And this morning, our sermon is titled The End of Time. And as I said, we find ourselves in the book of Revelation. Revelation. So if you're familiar with Revelation, some of you will be and some of you may not be.

[18:32] Good morning to everyone in the comments who's saying good morning, by the way. Revelation is written in what's known as a style, known as or a style called an apocalyptic form.

And apocalyptic literature was a type of Jewish literature that used symbolic imagery to communicate hope. It used imagery to communicate the ultimate triumph of God to the people who were in the midst of persecution.

So for people who were being persecuted, they would look to apocalyptic literature to see that God wins, to see that there is hope for a new day. So the book of Revelation is about the future and the present.

It's about both. Both and, as we often hear. It offers future hope to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, especially those who have suffered for their faith.

And we achieve that hope, we recognize that hope, by proclaiming that Christ is victorious over evil. and that ultimately we will be in eternity.

[19:48] We will live an eternal life with Jesus. Amen? And so Revelation also gives us present guidance because it teaches us about Jesus Christ and how we should live for Him and with Him right now.

And so in Revelation, through vivid and graphic imagery, we learn we learn that Jesus Christ is coming again. We learn that evil will be judged.

And we learn that the dead will be raised to judgment, resulting in eternal life or eternal destruction. That's the reality that we learn in Revelation. So let's have a little bit of a look at the background of Revelation for a moment. According to tradition, John, the author, was the only one of Jesus'

original 12 disciples who was not killed for, martyred for, his faith.

He also wrote the Gospel of John, the book of John in the Gospels, and he wrote the letters 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John. And by the way, we'll be taking a closer look in a short sermon series on 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John over the last three Sundays of August.

[21 : 18] So mark that on your calendar. So when he wrote Revelation, John was in exile on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea.

And he was sent there by the Romans. This was essentially a prison island. And he was sent there by the Romans for his belief in Jesus and his witness of the truth and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So this morning, I want us to recognize three things. Here's a three-point sermon for people who like them. Three things about the book of Revelation. First, that it presents to us a triumphant Christ.

Second, that it presents us the very center of the universe. It shows us the center of the universe and the center of God's plan. And third, the book of Revelation and the whole Bible present the truth that God will make all things right.

God will reset everything according to his perfect will and perfect plan. God will be the first of the universe. So first, how does Revelation present to us the triumphant Christ?

[22 : 34] Well, Revelation makes it abundantly clear to us. It assures us that in the end, God wins. So it appears that the Roman Empire rules the world during the time John is exiled.

That's what biblical scholars say, is that the Roman Empire is the top. The Roman Empire is ruling. And that John, as I said, is in exile on the island of Patmos.

But as the saying goes, things are not always as they seem. The Bible says in Romans 1, verse 8, I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

And as John addresses the churches early in the book of Revelation, he's clear that God has declared his power and authority over all things.

That's it. That's reality. So, while perception may be that the Roman Empire was in control, the Roman Empire was in power, reality says something different.

[23 : 57] So, let's recognize a few more other distinctive things about the book of Revelation and its structure. If you've read it and if you haven't, dig in.

It's a very meaty, very challenging book, but you can do it. It's a book of sounds and images and numbers.

If you read through the book yourself, take note of some of those things, common themes, common elements, some of the things that John highlights in his writing.

Watch for those elements. For example, the lampstands that John speaks about are meant to represent the churches that the book addresses.

And that's how Revelation works. And I want to pause for a second and say, many Christians throughout my entire life and many Christians that you know and perhaps you even have this view yourself, that somehow the book of Revelation can always be overlaid to contemporary history.

[25 : 05] You can say, yep, that's Russia. Yep, that's China. Yep, that's the US. Canada doesn't usually make the list, unfortunately, because we're too kind, we're too peaceful.

But I believe that if you're familiar with the book and if you're familiar with how people have interpreted it over the years, there's a tendency to try and contextualize or cram in current reality, current political situations into John's writing in Revelation.

And while I believe that ultimately much of that vision, much of that imagery does connect to the final stages of human history, I think it's unwise to try and proof text if you're not familiar with that term.

It's taking a verse or a passage of scripture and saying, here's what I want to prove and here's the verse that proves it. So I believe as Christians, as people who recognize the Bible as authoritative, we may tend to do that and it's not correct.

So I just wanted to pause and say that for many people, revelation can be applied to any different situation. And I'm sure if you think for a moment or two on your own, there are other challenges or conversations, hard conversations within church communities that happen because I read this passage this way and I read this passage this way and those two things don't connect so we can't be friends.

[26 : 44] Do you see what I'm saying there? So that's the reality of proof texting and seeking to justify your own perspective or your own arguments using scripture.

It can hurt people. So John is an artist. He's got a palette of metaphors. So imagine a painter. John has an entire array of metaphors that he works with.

And theologians suggest that revelation is more than a book. It's more a book of imagination than explanation. And so as I said a moment ago, I think people try to anchor it in reality, anchor it in facts and things that they can understand because it is challenging to read.

There's a lot of powerful and disturbing and challenging images in it. But when we seek to anchor every image and every detail in the book to something concrete that we can relate to in our present time, I personally believe, and I'm not alone in this, others have said that we may be missing the point if we try and do that.

So back on to our conversation. As some of you may know, the number seven in scripture is referred to as the number of completion.

[28 : 09] It's considered to be a perfect number in scripture. And so it's probably not too surprising that the number seven is used by John 54 times in the book of Revelation.

54 times John anchors the number seven in his text in some way. And the suggestion, one of them, is that Jesus visits seven churches in chapters two and three of Revelation.

And those churches are identified by name. But the suggestion has been made by biblical scholars that because there are seven listed, while there are seven named, Jesus actually visits all of his churches.

churches. So all of the churches, or indeed the universal church, is to whom the letter of, or the book of Revelation is directed.

Not seven individual churches and only them, but the entirety of the body of Christ, the universal church. So the second thing in our list of three this morning that I want us to recognize about the book of Revelation is that it presents to us, as I said at the beginning, the very center of the universe, or the center of God's plan.

[29 : 30] The Bible says in Revelation 4 verses 1 and 2, After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven.

And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, Come up here and I will show you what must take place after this. At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

So John is given a vision of the center of heaven, the center of all creation, and at the very center is a throne. And as the text says, someone is sitting on it.

So through this passage we see that the center of the universe is heaven itself. And the center of heaven is a throne, and there's someone as John says, and it turns out to be none other than our triumphant God sitting on that throne.

Rome was not in control of the world at the time John wrote Revelation. God was. Ottawa or Washington don't ultimately run North America.

[30 : 51] God does. God is up to something. And that something, my friends, is the revelation of his glory as he seeks to draw all people to himself, as I said.

The Bible says in Revelation 4 verses 6 to 11, also in front of the throne, there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center around the throne were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion.

The second was like an ox. The third had a face like a man. The fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings.

Day and night, they never stopped saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.

[31 : 59] whenever the living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to him who sits on the throne and lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever.

They lay their crowns, hear this, they lay their crowns before the throne and say, You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.

So at the center of the universe, then, we see not only God seated on his throne, but we also see that at the center of the universe, at the very center of this story, is the full worship of God.

Everyone worships God in the end. Revelation chapters five to nine declare to us that Christ and his church prevails against Satan and his adversaries.

And then we learn in Revelation 21 verses one to six that God will create a new heaven and a new earth for his redeemed people. Again, read Revelation.

[33 : 29] Be challenged by it, and it's okay if you don't get it. So what a glorious eternity then waits for those who bow before God's throne and recognize Jesus Christ as the Lord of their life.

The third thing I want us to recognize about the book of Revelation this morning is that this book, and in fact, the whole Bible, presents the truth that God will make all things right.

Consider this morning how beautifully Genesis and Revelation bracket the story of God. Genesis presents the creation of heavens and the earth.

Revelation presents the new heaven and new earth. Genesis tells us the creation of the sun, moon, and stars. Revelation tells us that there's no longer any need for a sun because God will be that light that we need.

Genesis tells of paradise lost. Revelation presents paradise regained. Genesis tells us that Satan was first in the garden.

[34 : 50] Revelation tells us that Satan will have no place in God's ultimate garden. Revelation promises a new heaven and a new earth and a new Jerusalem, it tells us.

And I want to take note that the word new there doesn't mean the old has been crumpled up and thrown away. That new that we see used in new heaven and new earth and new Jerusalem means rejuvenated, means restored, not replaced.

And I think as Christians, we may often say, I'm not going to worry about now because ultimately it's not going to matter. I'm not going to worry about taking care of myself or my physical or spiritual health because ultimately it won't matter.

I'm saved. I've accepted Jesus. I'm done. I challenge you to read again because the gospel of Jesus Christ, God's ultimate plan, is not just for you to get in.

It's for all people to come back to him. And as I've said many times over the past months, we are God's partners. We are God's agents in communicating his truth and his love to a world that doesn't recognize it, to a world that so desperately needs it.

[36 : 21] Friends, in a pandemic time like we're in now, do you think people need love? Do you think people need a compassionate ear to listen to them? A hand to reach out and help them with physical needs that they have?

With challenges that they have that they can't meet on their own? Absolutely. And we can be those people. We're called to be those people. So the question I have for you this morning is when God's story comes to its glorious conclusion, when the new heaven and the new earth are rejuvenated and restored, will you be there?

Imagine an angel shouting, move that bus. And your new home, your new home, is revealed to you. On that day, everything that you have experienced, every tear, every struggle, every moment of pain or loss, fear or anxiety, everything you have ever experienced, will have been worth it all. That the question, the question only you can answer this morning and ultimately in your life, is will you be there?

[38 : 06] I can assure you that there are people who deeply love and care for you, who want you to be there.

For me personally, I'm looking forward to seeing people that I miss, who are there waiting for me. I'm looking forward to meeting people I've never met.

Not yet. The story has been all about God wanting to be with you. Do you want to be with him?

And I'm not talking about ultimately, but every day, in every moment. I encourage you to talk to God about your desire to be with him, your desire to be in relationship with him.

God is not a genie that we only come to when we have needs. Absolutely, we need to bring our needs before God. But we also need to thank him and celebrate for what he's given us in relationships and provision, in gifts, in friends, in family, in safety, in a good country.

[39 : 28] We can be grateful in relationship with God beyond just coming to him in needs. And also come to him with grief. Come to him with challenge and fear and anxiety.

Because as I've said before, the book of Psalms is full of the human condition. And it's in scripture. So struggle and pain and questions for God are okay.

I promise you. my friends, we've completed our journey looking at the story together.

The upper story and the lower story from Genesis to Revelation. We've completed that story together. But together, we don't do this alone.

Together, we must continue living the story. The words of a familiar hymn will be our benediction and our prayer this morning.

[40 : 32] I would sing it, but I don't want to hurt your ears. Some people would say, oh, you've got a great voice, but I'm not going to try it this morning. Thou art worthy.

Thou art worthy. Thou art worthy, O Lord. Thou art worthy to receive glory. Glory and honor and praise.

For Thou hast created, hast all things created. Thou hast created all things. And for Thy pleasure, they are created.

Thou art worthy, O Lord. Thou art worthy. Thou art worthy. Thou art worthy, O Lord.

Thou art worthy to receive glory. Glory and honor and praise. Amen. My friends, go in peace, knowing that the God who created you desires to grow closer to you and to have you share the truth about him with everyone you meet.

[41 : 52] And if you're blessed with a long weekend this weekend as we are in Canada, enjoy that in whatever way suits you and suits your circumstances.

But experience the joy of God in your long weekend this weekend. And stay dry because it looks like it might rain. My friends, be blessed.

Go in peace and have a great week knowing that you are loved by the God who created all things and especially created you.

Amen.