

“Nothing Can Separate us from the Love of Christ”

Romans 8:31b-39

Some years just fly by and you wonder where the time has gone. 2020 was not one of those years. There is a very old Chinese phrase that is actually meant to be a curse. The phrase is, “May you live in interesting times.” 2020 will be remembered as “interesting times.” Just as there are days that drag on and seem like they will never end, there are years that seem to never end. 2020 happened to be one of those years.

But the good news isn't that 2020 is finally over. The Good News is that God carried us through these days, sustained us, and once again fulfilled His promise that nothing can separate us from His love. In my sermon on Thanksgiving, I mentioned how in my October and November newsletter articles, I had written about some of the blessings which I had personally and professionally experienced due to the strange disruptions of our normal lives and schedules.

Looking back at the totality of this year, last January seems like a long time ago. Maybe, in God's wisdom, we needed a reset to slow our lives down. There is

an old adage that every year seems to get shorter the older you get. I know of one psychologist who speculates that when you do something for the first time, in your mind, time seems to slow down. This is why when you drive somewhere for the first time, it seems to take longer than the drive home. And the older you get, the less “first things” there are left to do.

Until 2020, it seemed that every year was getting shorter, but there are still 24 hours in each day. I can firmly guarantee that 2021 will be shorter than 2020, because this year, there are only 365 days. Unfortunately, 2020 did not seem longer than other years because of all that happened on February 29.

We pray that the new year brings more opportunity for interaction and fellowship with more people. Think of all the “first” conversations that we missed out on. We are not meant to be separated from others, just as we are not meant to be separated from God. I pray that 2021 feels like a slow year because we will regain normalcy and get to do things that we haven’t done for so long that it will feel like the first time again.

I think back on all of my years, and I wonder how I would have responded if I missed out on a year of grade school, high school, or college. I would not have done well with Zoom classes.

As I now have one daughter in college and another who is married, like most people do every New Year, we spend time looking forward as well as looking back. I look back on their years at St. James School, and that seems like a long time ago. It is amazing how time separates us from the events of our life. I think back to my college graduation and realize that was 30 years ago. I took a

typewriter to college. I talk to my confirmation class and they want to know what kind of cellphone I had when I was young.

What is even more telling is when I try and use examples from history. These are children who were born after 9/11. That event does not have the impact on them as it does for those of us who watched it on TV. And for those of us who watched it on TV, it doesn't have the same impact or meaning as it does for those who lived or worked in New York.

Much in the same way, the assassination of John F. Kennedy is something I only know from history. I am separated from that event because I was not alive at the time, I do not have the visceral emotional memory of knowing exactly where I was when I heard that news. I am separated from that, and the more years that pass, the farther those events fade into the peripheral vision of history.

As we turn the page of the calendar, and as we move on from 2020, the angst and complexity of this very long year will eventually fade into history. That is what happens to all of the events of the day, even the seemingly monumental and overwhelming events of the day – except for one.

That's the unique thing about the death and resurrection of Jesus – nothing separates us from the love of Christ. And nothing separates us from that event in history. Thousands of years have passed and you are just as forgiven of your sins as the apostle John who stood at the foot of the cross. The promise of the resurrection of the dead is just as much for you as it was for the women who entered the tomb on Easter morning.

The promise, the reality that nothing in all creation can separate you from the love of God is on full display in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. No matter how many years pass, the cross and empty grave of Jesus is the one single, central event to which all of human history is connected.

Adam has the right to enter into the wedding feast of Christ and His bride the Church because the Son of God was promised to come and crush the head of Satan. Abraham has the right to sit at the wedding feast of Christ because God credited his faith in the coming Messiah as righteousness. You are invited to the wedding feast. As Jesus says, “Blessed are those servants who stay dressed for action and keep their lamps burning.”

No matter how much time remains until Christ returns, and no matter what this next year may bring, His love for you will not fade away; the washing away of your sins will not fade away; the promise of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting will not diminish or be separated from you in any way. On the contrary, as St. Paul says, “We are closer now to our salvation than ever before.”

Tonight we turn the page on the calendar and mark off another year of time – a day we have been longing for. This next year may go fast, or it may go slow. As God’s people, we long for the day when time will truly be irrelevant. In the timelessness of eternity, in the Feast which has no end, in the Wedding Banquet of Christ and His bride the Church a day will be like 1000 years and 1000 years will be like a day, and just like now, nothing will separate us from the love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.