



Roanoke, Virginia

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## ***“Who Goes With You?”***

*Revelation 21:1-6*

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There are moments when the road bends, and you stand right where memory meets mystery. Moments that cause us to look back because the rear-view mirror is clearer than the road ahead. When we say to ourselves, “Everything is going to be different now. This is entirely new. There is a whole new world opening up.” These moments are both scary and sacred.

Graduation is one of those moments. *\*\*Can you remember that feeling?*

You’ve finished exams, passing them I hope, made decisions on future plans, some even beyond the next 4 years, been handed a tassel and a cap, but what you’re really being handed is a question: “What now?”

And right behind that question, maybe quietly tiptoeing or maybe loudly stomping behind, comes another: “Who goes with me?”

This question is not just for our Seniors, however. Every person in this room knows something about transition, moving from one chapter of life to the next, standing in the middle of the already and the not-yet. Perhaps you too stand right where memory meets mystery, looking back because the road ahead is covered with the fog of uncertainty,

Off the top of my head I can point to several occasions when the transitions in my life were scary, uncertain, unsettling, even if I felt some nervous excitement: moving houses and changing schools in 3rd grade; when I lost my first grandparent in 10th grade; when our beloved dog died;



when my brother left for college (that leans more toward the nervous excitement); moving half-way across the country to begin seminary; marriage; the birth of my son. And there are many others.

I wonder what moments are coming up for you.

And honestly, life is about these moments. Life is these moments. Life itself is one long string of moments, with occasional knots and tangles, and perhaps even parts that are frayed.

Yet, at some point, knowing it takes guts, even immense faith, to head straight into the unknown that lies ahead, you make the decision to stop looking back behind you and face forward to move bravely with trust... for we do not know what tomorrow holds, but we trust in who holds our tomorrows.

And our scripture passage offers a look into what tomorrow may look like, the ultimate tomorrow that is. So, let us now turn to that vision—a vision not of endings, but of holy beginnings, one where everything is entirely new, a whole new world is opening up.

Reading from Revelation 21:1-6

*1Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." 5And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."*

And This is John of Patmos, exiled and isolated, watching the empire roar and flicker in its slow collapse. He is not writing from comfort. He is writing from the margins. And yet, it is from this lonely place that one of the most vivid and hopeful chapters of Scripture bursts forth.

A new heaven. A new earth.

As he builds up this breathtaking picture, John speaks to those major life events: “I will be his God and he shall be my son”—final new birth. The holy city is like a “bride dressed up for her husband”: a wedding. There will be “no more death or mourning or weeping or pain anymore”: the great recovery. It is a moment for him when memory meets mystery. It is a vision. It is not a timid glimpse or a vague spiritual metaphor, but a sweeping, seismic promise, a promise central to this



picture of this whole new world: “God has come to dwell with humans.” The new permanent guest.

These are not casual words. Revelation 21 doesn’t just describe a future hope; it redefines the present. The book includes what sometimes seems like an endless series of chilling images. Nearly all of them portray intense persecution, bloody battles and immense suffering. It is an unsettling book—one full of beasts, dragons, plagues. It’s a revelation that, if we didn’t know its “happy ending,” we might quit reading after about six or seven chapters. But at the end, what do we find?

Not vengeance. Not escape. We find hope. We find a promise of transformation.

We find God moving toward us.

It is a vision of God drawing closer, heaven moving toward earth, not the other way around. God does not stand at a distance. The holy meets the human: "See, the home of God is among mortals." The eternal makes a home among the fragile. This is the end of the story, yes—but it is also the beginning of everything new.

What does that mean for us today? What does this vision say to us in a world where things are still broken, where endings still sting, and where hope sometimes, if not oftentimes, feels like a cruel suggestion?

It says this: you do not go alone.

We are always leaving something. Always stepping into some version of the unknown. This is not just for the seniors, this is for us all. Some of you are leaving behind a season of grief. Others are leaving behind a familiar job, or the routines of high school. Some are leaving long-lasting friendships or a relationship that once held everything together. Others are staring down the dim corridor of endless uncertainty, waiting for a door or a diagnosis that has not yet appeared.

The message of Revelation 21, the message that I want you to hear this morning, no matter where you are in life, no matter what you are leaving or beginning, is this: God goes with you.

Verse 6 says, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” And in that declaration, God makes a claim—not just over cosmic history, but over your story.

When your beginning feels uncertain, or your ending unclear, God still speaks: “I am with you. I am your beginning and your end.”

There has not been a place in your story where God has not already been. And there is not a moment ahead where God will not be waiting for you.

The God who was with you in the hospital room celebrating birth or grieving death. The God who held you in the silence of depression or whispered through laughter. The God who



stayed when others walked away or guided you to walk away from what hurt. The God who walked into high school with you amid COVID shutdowns and global unrest. That God goes with you.

That God does not check out when your circumstances change. That God does not graduate when you go off to college or get your first job. That God doesn't retire when you grow old. That God is always with you and is always going ahead of you.

Let's me be clear, though. This text is not escapism. The new heaven and new earth is not about rapture or leaving this world behind. This text is not about moving away from the world, but about transformation within it. It's about renewal and resurrection, restoration and reconciliation. Not withdrawal, but presence. Not escape, but embrace.

C.S. Lewis once imagined something like this. In *The Last Battle*, the final book of the Narnia series, as the old Narnia passes away, the children find themselves in what appears to be a new land. At first, it looks just like the world they left behind—but something feels different. They realize it isn't foreign. It's more familiar. More real. More radiant. It's brighter, richer, more alive. Jewel the unicorn cries out, "I have come home at last! This is my real country!" and the call rings out, "Further up and further in!"

Lewis wasn't describing a fantasy escape. He was describing the deep truth beneath our reality. That what God is preparing isn't an alternative to this life—it is the completion of it.

That's exactly what John is being shown, thus showing us. The new heaven and new earth are not replacements. They are renewals. It's not about erasing the old, but fulfilling it. At every point of the beautiful, symbolic, and yet still unknown future, John is saying: "It's like this, but much, much more so."

Revelation 21 invites us to walk deeper into this world. To move "further up and further in," not away from life, but toward the truer life still unfolding. God's future is not less real. It's more real.

So, when you wonder what's next, hear this: the new creation isn't waiting at the finish line. It's already breaking in—around you, and within you.

The voice from the throne doesn't shout commands. It whispers presence: "See, I am making all things new." It begins with the invitation to "see." To see the world as God sees. Where you see rubble now, God sees foundation. Where you see a tomb, God sees a womb. Where you see death, God sees life. Where you see the end, God whispers, "This is only the beginning."



And one day you will arrive “further up and further in” to see the world more clearly, and cry out “I have come home at last!”

So, let me ask you: What are you stepping into right now?  
What are you being asked to leave behind?  
Where is God nudging you to move, to trust, to begin again?  
Because whatever that is, you do not step into it alone.

### **God Goes With You.**

The God who became flesh in Jesus Christ to dwell with us is not content to watch from the sidelines. God is in the thick of it—with us, beside us, within us.

So yes—God goes with you.

Let me repeat that for these Seniors. God goes with you.  
But not only God.

### **This Church Goes with You.**

You carry this church with you. Not like a heavy book in your bag, pulling you backward, but like a rhythm in your soul guiding your steps.

This church goes with you. You carry a people who tried, however imperfectly, to reflect God’s love to you and to nurture you in God’s love.

The Sunday school teacher who remembered your name. Youth leaders who made space for your questions. The adult who showed up, week after week. The mentor who watched your recital, or game, or performance.

Seniors, you came into high school just as the world was coming undone. Zoom classrooms. Empty sanctuaries. Elbow bumps instead of hugs. And yet—you didn’t lose faith. You lived it.

And this church walked that with you. We may not walk onto campus with you or to your desk at your first job, but know this church will always love you! We will be with you, beside you, and behind you. When you rise, we cheer. When you fall, we pray. And when you come home again (and you better come back to see us), we’ll be here.

### **This church goes with you.**

So beloved—seniors, seekers, rebuilders, dreamers—let this vision of Revelation hold you. Let it expand your imagination. Because what God is doing is more than survival. It is more than comfort. It is nothing less than resurrection.



A new heaven and a new earth. No more sea—that ancient symbol of chaos and danger. No more weeping. No more death. No more pain. It's not here yet in full. But it is coming. It is being born, moment by moment, in lives that dare to trust that love has the final word.

Go into what's next—not with fear, but with courage.

Go not alone, but accompanied by grace.

Go not just to find blessing—but to be one.

And when you wonder who goes with you—

May you remember the church that shaped you,

The mentors who lifted you,

The faith that lives inside you,

And the God who forever loves you, and who now declares,

"See, I am making all things new."

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

