

**Christ Presbyterian Church
Edina, Minnesota
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Carmen Means**

Good morning! Good morning! Good morning! My name is Pastor Carmen Means. I am the lead pastor of a very aggressively growing church in south Minneapolis, right on the corner of 30th Street and 4th Avenue. God is doing some amazing things in Minneapolis. How many of you know that God is everywhere? Yes, God is everywhere! So you all are going to talk back to me this morning?

[All:] Amen.

Well, He answered my prayers! I just want to make this disclaimer. If I am totally horrible today, don't email me but you can email timothyclark@urbanventures.org. He was part of me getting here or if you can't get ahold of him, you can email Pastor John Crosby, johnc@cpconline.org. Amen! All your complaints can be forwarded to them and I am sure they will handle them for you.

It's truly an honor to be here today. It's an honor just to be with believers regardless of the culture differences, regardless of just life, period. It is always an honor to be before people who believe that Jesus Christ still lives. So by a round of applause, if you believe that He still lives, put your hands together.

[Clapping.]

In a world where so many things are going on when Pastor came down to The Movement and visited us that day after the Charleston tragedy, something amazing just happened with us. I just got to a place where so many things happened. God puts us in a place where you have to just trust Him. We all could turn to the news. All of us have different perspectives. Some will share their perspectives very broadly, very boldly. Others are ashamed and maybe just kind of thrown by different things that are happening but I think the ground consciousness, the ground of commonality, is that regardless of how ugly it gets, we know that God's love never fails. Yes, God's love never fails and today I'm going to minister to you about that.

When they asked me to do Revelation, I was horrified. I just felt like, this is the end of my preaching career because I don't even read Revelation unless it's the title of a movie. When we think about Revelation, we see the fire and brimstone. People are running around. The last days are coming. And if you grew up in the background that I came from, a very Pentecostal, charismatic background, fire and brimstone, I'm like, dude, this is *the* end. Who would have thought that Edina would take a girl from the hood *out!*

But as I began to read it, God began to give me fresh eyes about things that I thought that I knew. I just celebrated a 38th birthday. I grew up in the church. I'm a fifth-generation pastor. I was a youth pastor for 12 years. I survived. So if I seem a little bit disconnected with you

generationally, it's because I'm still a youth pastor at heart. As a matter of fact, we are going to show a clip from a Disney movie because I love Disney. I believe that God is in Disney. I do. Yes! Let's pray.

Father, we bless Your Name because You are holy, God, because You are great, God. Besides You, there is none. We thank You. We count this a privilege to be here today together, learning and wanting to know more of You. There are so many other places we could be this morning but we decided to come here collectively, announcing that You are our Lord. You are our King. Do what only You can do on today. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done. Right here. Right now. In Jesus' Name, it is so. Everybody say

[All:] Amen.

I didn't get to meet Pastor Paul Tshihamba but I know that he preached last week and he ended the series on the prophets with the second half of Isaiah. As I go on to Revelation now, did anybody in here read Revelation? Five people? That's an improvement. So as we read about the new heaven and the new earth, it sure is enlightening to see just what God's perspective is and the way He is going to end this thing. He's going to end this thing and it's going to be amazing. Let's read about that. It says this in Revelation 21.

21 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" ⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Somebody say *everything*.

[All:] Everything.

Say it again. Say *everything*.

[All:] Everything!

This is a book of hope. It proclaims that Jesus' return will vindicate the righteous. The wicked will be judged. It was written to fulfill the full identity of Christ and to give warning and hope to all believers. It's one thing to be in church but it is something totally different for the church to be in you. How many understand, the church is not this building but we are the church? Amen. For some of you in here, you will be the only Bible that people around you will read. You will be the only Christ that they see.

I believe the Holy Spirit gives us fresh things. It is amazing to me as I grow in my faith and the Word of God that I am getting a fresh set of eyes to see who Jesus is and who God is. It's not

that God has changed, it's that my walk with Him is changing. My perspective of Him is changing.

I no longer see Him just as the God in the manger that Mary held. I no longer see Him as the one who was there on the cross for us. I'm beginning to see Him more and more as the risen King and as my loving Father, as my Alpha, as my Abba, and as my Daddy. As a young girl who did not grow up with her father in the home, it was imperative to me to get ahold of that. The God of the universe loves Carmen. The God of all creation loves Carmen. And, guess what? He didn't just start loving me. From Genesis to Revelation, He reveals pieces of His love to me, little by little. The Bible says precept upon precept; line upon line. He is madly in love with you and madly in love with me.

What a wonderful love story the Word of God is: that in the garden, He prepared all things new for us. And, yes, Eve came along and did what she did but it wasn't Eve that made it happen, brothers. Nothing happened until Adam did something so, ladies, we are off the hook. But in the beginning, He made all things new. He gave Adam and Eve Paradise but things kind of got altered. Satan came into the picture. The biggest risk factor that God gave His people was the power to choose. True love always produces risk. Anybody in here married? True love always produces risk. In the beginning, God gave us the risk of love. Genesis shows that and 66 books later, it ends with love. I understand that when I read Revelation that it really is a fulfillment of promises. It's the final act. It's the omega of the story. It's the whole full circle coming around. God is showing His people, "I started with new but when you leave here, I have all things new prepared for you in eternity." Is that not good news or what? Somebody say *all things new*.

[All:] All things new.

Revelation speaks of the future. It's the foretelling the future. It's the final act. Yes, it's the alpha. It's the omega. The world as we know it today will not last forever. Any people in here who remember way back when? From my culture my mother would say, "Oh, baby, I remember when I had a Coke-bottle figure." And then she'd say, "Now I'm just a 2-liter." You remember when you didn't have bags and you could do flips and cartwheels. You would make milestone promises like, "You know, when I get to be 30, *this* is what's going to happen. When I get to be 18, *this* is what's going to happen." We call those back-in-the-day people. You remember way back when.

I'm not that old but I remember the box-TVs and the hi-fi radios. I remember vinyl records. Anybody remember them? They had the A- and the B-sides. I remember when I first got my CD player and thought I was just the coolest kid on the block. How times change. My 8-year-old makes me feel so old because he has to program my phone. Times change. Time clicks. In October I will go to my 20th high school reunion. Nobody could have told me that hip-hop Oh, my gosh, I said hip-hop in here. I remember when Run-D.M.C. came out. You can put your hands up or wink at me. It's okay. They just played classical music here but I know some of you here love Run-D.M.C. You like the Beastie Boys and all that. And I know that some of you here love rock and roll and remember the time when all those feelings were new. But life is ticking away. The older I get, the more I understand that where I am right now is just temporary and, guess what? It's okay.

The Bible says that life is nothing but a vapor. It's here today and gone tomorrow. That gets me in the mindset to live now victorious. Live now as more than a conqueror. Live now being

unashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But I can't put my stakes in my *now* for there is an eternity that is waiting for me. I was not just built for now. God's love has made me so that I will not only live now, I will live eternally.

My son loves superhero movies. He has about every superhero movie you've ever heard of. As a matter of fact, he has an encyclopedia, about this big, full of superheroes. He always says, "Mom, if you could have one power, what would you have?" I said, "It would be if I could turn back time." Well, people, the reality is, we can't turn back time because God holds the time in His hands. And the reality also is that in Genesis when He made everything in the alpha, in the beginning, He had you in mind. His love never fails. It never runs out.

As we go on, we don't know what this new heaven will look like but it says He will give us a new heaven and a new earth. There was an old Gospel song that said,

Soon and very soon
We are going to see the King
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
We're going to see the king

Then it would go on.

No more cryin there,
We are going to see the King

You know Gospel music. We can take one song and make it last 20 minutes. Amen! You can put your hands together on that. But, also, if you also know Gospel music, you know nobody can sing music like Gospel music is sung. Gospel music put me in the perspective growing up that the only thing to look forward to was heaven. But if you know life, life is *not* only about getting to heaven. It's about what we do with what we have right now. Revelation lets me know that right now is not my totality. Right now is not why I exist. Revelation lets me know that right now is just temporary. It's setting me up for my eternity. God's love is so amazing. He desires to abide with me forever. Somebody say *forever*.

[All:] Forever!

We don't know what the new heaven will look like or what the new earth will look like, but we do know that we will be with Him forever. When Revelation says that God will make all things new, "all things" is inclusive. I would like to think that I will not struggle with the things that I struggle with now. I know that I'm up here as the pastor but I'm not one who has arrived. I am like Paul. I am still arriving. I am still making mistakes. As a matter of fact, the more mistakes, I make, the more it is really a testament to how God's love covers me. He is not just the God of my highs, He is also the God of my lows. He is my eternal God. He is the God of my going up and the God of my going down. From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, He is to be praised!

Revelation talks about the new Jerusalem. The new Jerusalem is where God is coming to live among us. Right now He dwells *in* us but He will come like the Son He sent to us. He will live and walk *among* us for we will be perfected. Can you imagine what perfection looks like? Can you imagine what it looks like now that you have the will power to say, "I am going to live for Christ"? But it is not just living for Him. One day we will be able to live *with* Him. The God in the

passages that we read and the hymns that we sing so passionately, we will be able to see face-to-face in this new world.

I'm going to show you a film clip from *Aladdin*. Has anybody seen *Aladdin*, the cartoon? If you didn't, rent it. Netflix it. It's a great movie. After if you Netflix it, make sure you Netflix *The Lion King*. It is another great movie. We are going to watch this clip real quick, talking about how there is a whole new world coming. I want to tell you this. I believe that the Word of God can be preached anywhere and I promise you, *A Whole New World* is a worship song.

[Film clip starts.]

[Jasmine:] How can you do that?

[Aladdin:] It's a magic carpet.

[Jasmine:] It's lovely.

[Aladdin:] You don't want to go for a ride, do you? We could get out of the palace, see the world.

[Jasmine:] Is it safe?

[Aladdin:] Sure, do you trust me?

[Jasmine:] What?

[Aladdin:] Do you trust me?

[Jasmine:] Yes.

[Aladdin:] I can show you the world
Shining, shimmering, splendid
Tell me, Princess, now when did
You last let your heart decide?

I can open your eyes
Take you wonder by wonder
Over, sideways and under
On a magic carpet ride

A whole new world
A new fantastic point of view
No one to tell us "no"
Or where to go
Or say we're only dreaming

[Jasmine:] A whole new world

[Film clip ends.]

Yes, that was worship! A whole new world! I won't go into the details of the movie about Princess Jasmine and Aladdin but not only did the song strike me, it struck me that he had to ask her, "Do you trust me?" And did you watch her face, her expression, when she said, "Yes"? The question today, people of God, is, do we really trust that God's Word is true? Do we trust that we are not just here for now but for eternity? Do we trust that what He said He would do is coming to pass. The promises He has given us are coming to pass whether we can see it or not? Do you trust Him this morning? In order for Princess Jasmine to see the world in a different perspective, she first had to trust Aladdin. In order for you to see the world in a different perspective, to see what God's intention is for you, you are going to have to trust Him.

I know that your problems might not look like my problems and your troubles might not look like my troubles, but guess what? If you are breathing, if you are living, you still have things that you're conquering. You still have things that you face and the world is built with hope-suckers that want to snatch the hope from us and tell us that this is as good as it gets. The world is damned, Christ is mad at us. But no, no, no! God is waiting for His people to rise up and be bold and say, "I trust You now. I'll live for You now but I'm also going to live with You in eternity." Do you trust Him this morning? For in your trust, there is a new world coming. Yes! Jasmine had to give something in order to get something.

Right now, God wants you to give up your preconceived idea of who you think He is and wrap yourself in who the Word of God says He is. We serve a God we can trust. Are you here because He is man or are you here because He is God? It takes a special love for God to get here at 9:30 in the morning. We trust a God who always, always has His original intentions at heart, a God who fulfills His promises. His love is amazing. From Genesis to Revelation, He loves us. He is the promise keeper. There is an eternal promise, an eternal hope. We serve a God who does not just supply us with liability coverage. Somebody laugh. There must be insurance salesmen in here. God is a God of full coverage. He provides for us from bumper to bumper. From Genesis to Revelation, we are covered. From your alpha to your omega, you are covered. Whether you like it or not, your omega is coming but your omega is not your end. In the beginning of time, we were covered. In Jeremiah it says,

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future [Jeremiah 29:11].

I know that a lot of people will say that is not relevant to us today but it is. God has an amazing plan for us. He says,

⁵ "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb [Jeremiah 1:5].

He said that He would never Somebody say *never*.

[All:] Never!

The eternal God said,

⁵ . . . I will never leave you nor forsake you [Joshua 1:5].

Another Scripture says,

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord [Romans 8:38-39].

Life has a tendency to persuade you of things but *nothing* can separate us from the love of God. It says,

² I go to prepare a place for you [John 14:2].

God will never leave us. He will never forsake us. Let me tell you this. In Genesis, the sun is created but it is in Revelation that the sun is not needed. In Genesis, Satan is victorious but it is in Revelation that Satan is defeated. In Genesis, sin enters the human race but it is in Revelation that sin is no more. In Genesis, people run and they hide from God but it is in Revelation that we live among a true and living God. In Genesis, people are cursed but it is in Revelation that the curse is removed. Yes! If you believe that, put your hands together.

[Clapping.]

In Genesis tears are shed. There is sorrow for sin but in Revelation, there is no more sin. There are no more tears. There is no more sorrow. In Genesis, the garden and the earth are cursed but it is in Revelation that God's city is glorified. The earth is made new. In Genesis, paradise is lost but it is in Revelation that paradise is regained. In Genesis, people are doomed to death but it is in Revelation that death is defeated. Believers will live and reign with God forever. There are no more tears. There is no more sorrow. Revelation is ours because of the promise.

I want to leave you with this. On Friday I had the responsibility for something I never look forward to actually. I prayed and asked the Lord, "Lord, I do not want to do this funeral. Please have somebody else give words for this funeral." One of our members' 25-year-old son after he graduated from college committed suicide last week. He was a promising young man, huge in the art community. There were probably 1,000-plus people at his memorial service and they talked about what a lovely person he was, how he loved people. He was a big guy, 6'3", an African-American man and He loved God.

The woman who officiated at the funeral said God did not take him from us but God did receive him when he decided to go. He suffered from mental illness and was just at the end of his rope. He could not take it anymore. But I can't help but wonder, "Lord God, how can one get so low that they no longer see the hope? How could one get so low that they can no longer see the promise?" And more than that, I want to say this to you, regardless of where you are in your life today, your temporary state does not detour God's eternal plan for you. Your temporary trouble, your temporary state of being, does not take God by surprise for there is still an eternal plan for you. In hope and despair, His love never fails. There's an old hymn that says,

Jesus never fails, Jesus never fails,
Heav'n and earth may pass away,
But Jesus never fails.

Tho' the sky be dark and drear,
Fierce and strong the gale,
Just remember He is near,
And He will not fail.

In life's dark and bitter hour,
Love will still prevail;
Trust His everlasting pow'r,
Jesus will not fail.

Revelation, the final hour, the finale of time, lets us know that He was on the throne in Genesis but He will also be on the throne in Revelation for the love of God will never fail. There is a whole new world awaiting those who love Him. We will meet Him there.

Father, we bless Your Name. You are great, God. You are holy, God and Your love never fails and never gives up and never runs out on us. Lord God, even as we go through the passages of Scripture and regardless of where we land ourselves on the scholar map, there are still questions we have about this world and this life we are yet in. Let our trust and hope be a stake in You that You will never leave us. You will never forsake us and one day soon, not only will You live inside of us, You will dwell among us. We look forward to that day, that time, that hour, but in the meantime, we hold onto Your hope. We hold onto Your promise. And we live as people who understand that our hope will not die out. Our hope will not run drear. You are always with us, always near. In Jesus' Name. And everyone say,

[All:] Amen!

And everyone say,

[All:] Amen!

Amen! You believe that the Word of God is true! You can just clap and believe that!

[Clapping.]

The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.

