If you ever read arguments for the existence of God, which I am sure you do, there is an argument that is sort of a teleological argument, which you will probably come across. Now before going on I promise I won’t use the term teleological anymore, but let me briefly explain the argument. It is kind of like when Colonel Mustard finds a dead body and a candlestick in the Conservatory. He deduces from what he sees, that Professor Plum has not taken being denied tenure very well. In this case, however, the evidence for God’s existence is not a candlestick or Professor Plum’s mental state but is rather clues left by God in creation. For example something like our innate sense of right and wrong is seen as evidence for God’s existence. What I mean by this is that if we turn on the television and see a story about starving children, there is something inside of us that tells us that this is not right. The argument says that this sense that all is not right is something that God baked into creation. In other words God left an imprint of himself on this world, something like when someone with too much cologne leaves a room, their scent lingers, but in this case it is God’s scent lingers that lingers in us.

Now since I think all of us here believe in God we need to take this argument a step further. It is not enough to see evidence of God in creation but rather the Christians’ job is to cultivate and develop that evidence found in us so that we may grow in harmony with the God who created us. For Christians, our end goal is to be in communion with God and so our life is a preparation for where it is that we are going. So to put it in other terms if your goal in life was to move to Norway you would start doing things to prepare you for that move. You might learn Norwegian, buy a sweater with snowflakes or reindeer on it and start eating food without flavor. Where you are going would influence things that you are doing right now. Similarly, the Christian should be doing things to help them fit in with God’s kingdom

So I realize this has been a little bit of a long and somewhat odd introduction, but you may think that about all of my introductions. The basics of it are that we are all born with an imprint of the divine and our goal in this life is to cultivate and grow that imprint because we want to be with God forever. And so now the question is what does that have to do with our readings today. Well, what got me thinking about all of this was the bit we had from the Revelation of John. I am sure you were listening but just in case I am going to reread a rather lengthy section of it. The passage states, “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. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And 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; he 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.’ And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’"

This vision that John gives us today is where things are going, it is the place for which we are to prepare. N.T. Wright in his book Simply Christian puts it this way, “Christians are called to leave behind, in the tomb of Jesus Christ, all that belongs to the brokenness and incompleteness of the present world ... That, quite simply, is what it means to be Christian: to follow Jesus Christ into the new world, God's new world, which he has thrown open before us.” Today is the big reveal of that new world and as N.T. Wright points out we are to be on a journey, leaving behind that which is not of God and heading toward this New Jerusalem. And if you like we can say that this New Jerusalem is heaven.

I sometimes hesitate to use the term heaven, these days, because it seems to have a rather sentimental hue to it. It is vaguely seen as a sort of cosmic Disneyland that you go to if you are good, kind of good or were nice to your dog in fourth grade. It is an all you can eat buffet where you never gain weight, your breath is always minty fresh and room service always has your favorite brand of yogurt. But what we hear today is that God is, “making all things new.” Heaven, earth and all of creation are going to be changed. And the way that these things are going to be changed is that they are going to be restored to the way God intended them to be in the first place, before sin entered the world. When these things are made new they are going to bring harmony between ourselves and God, ourselves and creation and ourselves and each other. That is why N.T. Wright talks about leaving the brokenness and incompleteness. And if this is where we are going then our desire should be to participate in the new creation and to begin to look the way that God created us to be. So Christianity is about change. Not about changing the world so that it fits better with what we want but changing ourselves so that we fit better with what God wants. Changing ourselves so that we are ready for the new creation.

The other day we were discussing heresies in Sunday School, because we rock pretty hard. One of the heresies we discussed was Pelagianism, which basically argued that there was no original sin. In practical terms what this means is that all we need to do to be in communion with God is to try really hard and to imitate Jesus and all would be well. It is sort of the passing a kidney stone school of salvation. I bring this up because I think my sermon up to this point may have sounded a little Pelagian. It may have sounded like I was saying we just need to try really hard so that we can be prepared for the new heaven and the new earth. And I would say that this is half right. We believe that God calls us to do certain things; we know that God calls us to resist sin and we are to try and do those things. We also know that we are incapable of doing it fully and completely, which is why Jesus came. Jesus came to make all things new and to be the means by which things could be made new. And so in this pursuit of change we must rely on Jesus because we are not fully capable of doing it ourselves.

We were created by God to be in communion and harmony with him and there is evidence of this sprinkled throughout creation. And we don’t just have to look at residual evidence because we also have the life and teachings of Jesus on which to focus. We know that we need to do even the hard things like loving and praying for our enemies. But we also know that our strength is not enough to make it happen and so we must pray and ask God to strengthen us so that we may be formed into the new creation which will be ready in God’s time. We will see the New Jerusalem, which has been prepared as bride adorned for her husband. But the preparation starts now and can only be done through Jesus Christ. That is the only way that we may be with God both this day and forevermore.