

*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. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also in front of the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal....Day and night they never stop saying: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.' – Rev. 4*

This is going to be quite a year. With a college senior, a college sophomore, a high school senior, and a kindergartener, this is going to be quite a year.

Sometimes hope can be a spiritual discipline. It takes work to look forward to anything when things are bleak. But while we've been seeking and utilizing tools to help us get through COVIDland, this week I want to begin looking forward to life beyond it. We're approaching the last Sunday of the school year, summer is coming soon, and this is a perfect time to look ahead.

In the next 365 days, we are anticipating celebrating a lot of "lasts" as our family anticipates two graduations, one from college and one from high school. Last classes, last tests, last swim meets and water polo games, graduation parties. But with these lasts are paired a lot of firsts. We hope to see our daughter's first performance since high school and since entering the Conservatory, our youngest's first day of school, first teacher, and first report card.

To look forward in the midst of hard times is, well, hard. But God has given us such hope for the future, we simply have to keep our eyes looking forward. So much of the bible is written to persecuted and oppressed people. While most of us can't identify with the oppression the original readers of Revelation experienced, we can identify with the desire for a hopeful future. And so God gives us this delicious foretaste of heaven.

It would be enough if heaven were simply being in God's presence. But to worship God In Person! To sit at the foot of His throne and sing all the great praise songs and hymns throughout history and world culture, this will simply be astounding. For me, an eternity practicing new songs to sing and play, and then using them to worship the God who created me, gave me the very tools and gifts to worship Him, and to join with millions of others in this same worship... it's just too much.

So while we shelter in place and dream of worshiping together at church, let yourself dream further, look farther, and imagine forward into our glorious future. When you do, nothing that is or can be here seems all that devastating, all that important, or all that long. Hope is a spiritual discipline, so practice it this week with me.

Questions to ponder:

What is your favorite image of the future from the bible?

Take some time to put yourself in that moment completely. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel?

Now think about the fact that this is not a fantasy, but a coming reality, and thank God even now that you will experience it someday.