

Time travel makes for interesting story lines, like Ron Howard's movie, "Back to the Future." We love to fantasize about what it would be like to go back or look ahead. What if we could change the past so the future would be more like we wanted? Or see our future ahead of time, so that we understand better how to live in the present? Seems impossible and scary at the same time, doesn't it. But in a sense, that has already been available to us all along. Genesis gives us a backward look at the perfect creation of the past that has been lost, while Revelation reveals a perfect future creation to be restored. We cannot change what has been done, but a future is promised that is more than we could ever have hoped for or deserved.

Moses caught a glimpse of that glory on a mountain called Sinai. Jesus shared this bright light in the wedding at Cana, the feeding of 5000, and the miracle of Easter. The disciples had their eyes opened to this reality on the mount of Transfiguration and the Road to Emmaus. Consider all of the books of the Bible, sandwiched between Genesis and Revelation as our own Back to the Future script. In doing so, we have a guideline or script, that will carry us along on that journey to a remarkable future that comes as a glorious gift from the God who loves us so much.

Years ago, I took a trip to visit my son and his wife in Switzerland. I was travelling alone, but I was surrounded by hundreds of other travelers. I remember walking down the ramp to a Boeing 747, surrounded by people of every nation, all speaking many languages. I knew none of them, but we were headed to the same destination. At the time I wondered if this is what it will look like upon our arrival in heaven. In a sense, that became an important vision for me.

Have you ever had a vision that changed your present and future? John Kennedy saw a chance to put a man on the moon. Martin Luther King dreamed God would bring a change to our hearts so all would be judged by their character and not the color of their skin. Your parents saw a future in their life with each other. What about the dreams you have had? What would you give to be able to go back and redo what you could in the past to change the future and make your dreams come true? Would it help to know what tomorrow will bring to help you more effectively do what you will do today? What visions would help guide you forward?

John had a vision of the only future that can change this sinful world. We make his vision more complicated than needs be, as control and understanding are often more important to us than the trust of faith. We would prefer earth to look like heaven and forget heaven will replace earth. Rather than basking in the glory of an eternal future, we allow the distractions of a broken world to make this vision seem impossible, impractical, and not to be believed.

We have heard that history allows lessons to keep us from repeating mistakes of the past. Or, in other words, going back to the past might indeed allow us to change our future. What do you think about that. Too often we live only for today, erasing yesterday and ignoring tomorrow. We like to control what we can control and the future and past seem out of our grasp. Or are they? As people of faith, our script called the Bible allows us to time travel to both the past and future as a way of helping us live more confidently and purposefully in the present. What do you think about that? God created a perfect world that daily is only a distant shadow of broken promises and painful living. Christmas and

Easter have assured a glorious future that will look more like God's plan than what we have broken. His offer to forgive our brokenness daily allows for a fresh start with the promise of a holy future secured. And if that doesn't open our eyes to a new way of living, we have certainly gone off script.

I have a friend who always reads the end of a novel, before he begins. He wants to know where he is going before he starts. I'm not recommending that but understand it in a different way as I think about what we are talking about today. For instance, in reading a parable of Jesus, we discover that when we understand the ending, we can go back and read the parable again, finding what we missed the time through, and better understand how it speaks to me. Then, as we read the parable again, we have a better grasp for Jesus' intent and his script for our living today. Revelation's back to the future approach helps faithful living in the same way.

Picture what Johns shares: *'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore ... for the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'* Like a lamb, God came into our present in Bethlehem's manger. In his life, death, and resurrection Jesus (the Shepherd King) leads us on a journey to that new future. Revelation shares a future vision, so our earthly present does not distract us from the gift of life that has already been given. This is a call to keep our eyes on the prize and our feet firmly grounded in the life that has been changing us from the beginning.

Revelations speaks of a new creation, and what a gift of love that is! The first creation was perfect, yet sin has changed its appearance. God could have responded in anger or total destruction and yet he didn't. So, there would be no mistake, he came in person of Jesus to re-create or make all things new. He came back from the future to change our past, so that our present would have meaning, hope, and a love that might change the future of those around us.

We like sheep who have gone astray, are made clean in the baptismal flood, and called to shepherd others, as we have been served by Christ. All Saints is the reminder that God has given everything (even his Son) to forgive a painful past and begin a hope filled future. Yet our world pays more attention to Halloween than today's joy of All the Saints! It is our joy to help the world around us see the vision we have seen and help change the hopes and dreams of a broken world.

In a sense, Halloween is no different from the idea of time travel. Costumes become a way to pretend we are someone else and travel where we have never been before. It is a playful way to hide from the reality of a scary world. It is a vision of pretending but illustrates what life is truly like -- hiding, imagining, and hoping for good treats. Jesus says the best treat is already on the table, and there is no reason to hide from what we fear or pretend to be whom we aren't.

The first Halloween was in a garden as Adam and Eve tried to hide what they really were. Easter proclaims, "there is no need to hide from or fear the future!" What a heavenly present such grace allows us to live in. Our celebration of All Saints is a reversal of the Halloween syndrome. It announces an end to hiding who we are and the fear of what we might not become. The veil has been lifted, and the glory of God's love has chased the darkness of yesterday and tomorrow away forever.

The script from Genesis through Revelation is a time travel manual that reveals the back to the future God has intended from Day One. In a perfect plot of glory, Jesus (God in the Flesh) came to show us the way in his life, death, and resurrection. He took off the mask of God and put on the mask of humanity, so his sacrifice would lift us into peace. His mission showed how our hope-filled future has already overcome our sin-struggling past. Now we are free to live in the present as people of change! People of hope! People of servant love!

How much easier it is to live when we know the ending before we even see the beginning – and all the hard work (like Calvary and an empty tomb) are taken care of for us by our God of love. No longer do we need to wander in the darkness, hiding who we are and hoping for what we don't deserve. We are loved! We are home! We are gifted with peace. Welcome home ... already and for always.