



THERE IS NO FLU IN HEAVEN!

God created time (Genesis 1), but the calendar is a human invention. Ancient civilizations developed calendars based on lunar and solar cycles, for agricultural and social purposes. The Gregorian calendar we use today originated in 1582 with Pope Gregory XIII. Although we know that the calendar's January 1 designation is man-made, it still inspires us to reflect on the outgoing year and get a fresh start in the new one.

However, for many people including myself, the intended 2025 fresh start was smothered by tissues and blunted by the flu. A variety of miserable maladies have visited so many people this month, erasing plans from our calendars and causing serious complications for some. How good it is to know that there is no flu, nor any other kind of sickness, in heaven!

In addition, there will be no more cars plowing into crowds of innocent people, nor deathly blizzards, devastating earthquakes or wildfires, all of which have caused such hardship and heartache in the first weeks of this year.

If illness or bad news have laid you low this month, drink deeply of this restorative trust about the future, from God's holy Word: "[God] will dwell with...his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away...Behold, I am making all things new" (Revelation 21:3-5). As God himself declared about this Revelation to the apostle John, "these words are trustworthy and true" (Revelation 21:5 and 22:6).

All of God's people have this spectacular scenario to look forward to, in what we commonly call heaven but which is biblically revealed as "new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13).

It will be an idyllic re-creation of Eden, where God and humans lived in harmony with one another and with nature before sin seriously skewed everything. In the new heavens and new earth, all things will once again be put right – our fondest, finest dream come true (Revelation 21:1-7).

Pause to think about what that will be like: living in the glorious company of God, in a glorified body, where there is no sin or evil: no rancor, war, or hunger; no crime, injustice, or natural disasters; no sickness, pain, or death. God's love will be palpable, his light unquenchable (Revelation 21:23-27; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

All are invited there, by accepting the free gift of salvation through Jesus, to live with Him in this perfect place eternally. Hallelujah! As we live in confident expectation, ponder this biblical advice from St. Peter: "Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace" (2 Peter 3:14). This comes by cooperating with God's grace.

But how do we manage in the here and now, when life falls so far short of this glorious scenario? By holding the promise of heaven firmly within us, anchored by the true story of Christmas, which documented the long-awaited birth of Emmanuel or "God with us." Although Jesus later left the earth bodily, He is still with us through the active presence of his Holy Spirit in his followers (Matthew 28:20; John 14:15-17).

We can also maintain hope by remembering the Epiphany, marking the divine manifestation of Jesus to the Gentiles when the wise men sought out the Christ child in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1-12). To manifest means "to reveal, to provide evidence for." Such divine manifestation was not limited to that one event 2,000 years ago. We have Jesus' assurance that "he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him"; He continues to reveal himself through everyday occurrences and people, as He wills (John 14:21).

We can draw peace and strength in today's struggles by embracing the Lord's offer of a heavenly future, and by perceiving remarkable moments of heaven breaking through on earth today. We can even embody that divine breakthrough, as we extend God's love to others.

– Psalm 103:2-5

With love in the Lord,
The Rev. Christine Maddux