

THE Best IS YET TO COME

The End

Peter Hartwig

“When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.”

1 Corinthians 15:28

Good morning! Or whatever time of day it is for you...my name is Peter Hartwig and for the last couple of years, I have gotten to be NCC's theologian in residence. I've recently moved to Charlotte, NC for a new chapter in the story of being Peter. But I miss seeing my NCC family and that's why I am really grateful for the chance to talk with you for the next 5 days on NCC daily.

As you might expect, I'd like to take a pretty straightforwardly theological approach (though hopefully not too dry) approach to these five days and talk to you about a subject in Christian theology called "Eschatology." Now your first time hearing that word is always a little uncomfortable because - I don't know - it just sounds weird. But the English word "eschatology" comes from the Greek word "eschaton" which means "the end of something or the goal of something." In Christian theology, eschatology has come to mean "the study of God's intended end for the world." That's what we'll be talking about.

Today, I want to start off simply by making this observation: the end is important for the middle.

Put another way, where you think history is going really makes a difference for how you live in it. If you think the world is going to drown in liquid flame, if you are expecting the heat death of the universe, if you think the revolution is inevitable -- it changes how you decide to live. Your idea of the end changes - or is at least connected to - how you live in the middle.

Of course, talking about THE END is always a bit speculative, because none of us has lived through THE END. As Dick Foth said in his sermon a few weeks ago "I haven't done that part yet."

That instability can make you feel - well - unstable when we talk eschatology. But, this week, I'd like to begin to fill in our vision, our expectations of God's intended end for creation.

Let me just direct your attention to one often-overlooked sentence in the New Testament. It was written by Paul of Tarsus in a letter that he sent to a community of Christians in Corinth. He said, "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all." (1 Cor 15.28). OK - I see the gymnastics too here. People getting submitted and being submitted TO and all that. In my head, it looks like a party of people too polite to stop bowing to each other. But the part I want us to focus on is that last phrase: "that God may be all in all."

The Greek here reads "ta panta en pasin." You might translate it this way: "that God might be the everything in everything."

Paul is talking about God's biggest intention for world history. One day there will come a day, after all the wrestling and struggling is done, when God will be "all in all." I'm not going to tell you that I know exactly what that means. But it *sounds* to me like it means that God is going to be so radically near to creation you will have some trouble telling God apart from reality. God will be incredibly close. If God is all in all - then that sinking feeling of distance from God that so many of us know so well would be solved as easily as walking out your front door.

That is the future we are looking towards. That is the best that is yet to come. The day when God will be all in all.

Before I go, I'd just like to say that if I say anything this week that sparks a thought for you, anything you'd like to talk about - send me an email. Peter.hartwig@national.cc

God bless, NCC family. Let's find some time to talk tomorrow. Whenever works for you, works for me.

How have you decided to live life? Are you living as if the end will be the best? How can you make a shift to enjoy life and live it to the fullest?