



REBOOT: "Refocused"

Bible Text: Revelation 21:1-7

*Dr. Michael F. Gardner, Senior Pastor
Old Mission United Methodist Church*

*Welcome to "Back to School Sunday." I hope you're having a great time in worship today. How about we give some love to all our musicians and staff members who have made that happen?

And how cool is it that we survived a month of *construction and rehab so they got to kick off the school year in a renovated music room last Wednesday night, and we get to worship in a *renovated and renewed Sanctuary this morning? Look around. Pretty cool!

Judging from the number of pictures on *Facebook and backpacks here today, the start of school is in full swing. How many of you have family members who *started school last week or start school in the next few days? It's a wild and crazy time. But it's all good!

At least most of it, give or take a minor drama or two and the occasional bad hair moment. *My granddaughter will never forgive her dad for that picture. It's going to be in our family album forever!

We sometimes forget during the *never-ending news cycle and drama of the White House that there is good news in the world. Human beings are capable of good, even in a crazy, chaotic world. And God is always good. Maybe we ought to *focus on that!

My friend Junius Dotson likes to say when he leads worship, **"God is good."* And the people answer, **"All the time."* Then he says, **"All the time..."* And they answer, **"God is good."* Try that with me. *

Makes you feel better, doesn't it? If you have a bad day or a challenging moment this week, try repeating that. You get that for free just by coming to worship this morning!

Schools are not the only thing starting up this week. TV Networks announced their fall schedule this week. It's amazing the number of **"reboots"* and recycling of old TV shows. Some of us are still streaming and binge-watching the old ones when we can't find anything we like on TV or just can't stand the commercials.

There's the 1980's detective drama *Magnum P.I. Some of us remember the 80's! * But now the Ferrari has a new driver. *

And then there's the 1990s comedy - *Murphy Brown. And the original cast is back on board for the "redo." * I didn't even know some of them were still alive! But you know a show about real journalism in the age of fake news might just be what we need!

And it's not just network TV. Hulu announced that the romantic comedy, **Four Weddings and a Funeral*, is headed to TV. They are developing the 1994 British movie into a series. * But it will have a brand-new cast since Hugh Grant is, well, no longer a heart-throb. * Sad but true. Aging gets to the best and worst of us.

It's not like it's a new idea. There are already remakes on TV — Some are OK, some not so good. *The 1968's classic *Hawaii Five-0*, rebooted a few years ago* and is now in its eighth season.

And then there's the reboot of one of my favorite 70's TV shows, **MacGyver*. I will leave it to you to rate the reboot. * But critics have not been kind. You can see me after worship for my opinion. *

But I ought to have a better attitude. * In fact, I want to talk about that this morning. * Sometimes we really need to reboot our lives, go back to our original design, as we have been talking about the last two weeks. And God didn't design us have a *bad attitude.

But sometimes we just need to be reminded where to focus, where to keep our mind oriented, and to *refocus our lives that direction.

In ***Hebrews 12:1-2** we find this instruction. ****"Let us keep on running the race marked out for us, and fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."*** (Hebrews 12:1-2)¹

That's good advice for runners and for everyone. And here's a little more. We ought to remember that life is a long-distance event. We need to keep our ***focus** on Jesus for the long haul.

I don't know about you but I am tempted to ***focus** everywhere else! On the stuff I have to do, on the list of things undone, on a new problem or challenge, or a problem person. How about you?

**If we did a reality check in the faith and trust department –
*how many times would your check bounce? Too many times.**

***At least that's true for me.** It makes a difference to keep our eyes focused on the right things. I had eye surgery last Spring. It let me get rid of glasses – but more important - I can now see clearly. I had totally forgotten what it was like to be able to clearly focus.

***The same thing is true in our faith. Focus matters.**

***These weeks, parents are sending children back to school, or college. That equals stress! Children and students are worrying about whether they'll have friends, and if they'll fit in. Some of us are long past school days, but life has challenges, no matter what our age, marital status, or family configuration may be.**

***I know of no better reminder of what we most need to know than our text from the last Book of the Bible for today.**

Look at Revelation 21, and down to verse three.

****"God's home is among his people, and he will be with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be their God."*** (Revelation. 21:3)²

¹ Hebrews 12:1-2, paraphrased by the author.

God is with us! John was writing to people undergoing some of the worst times imaginable. They were persecuted for their faith, their suffering worse than the very worst of our worst days. But John's told them to not give up or lose heart. **God was with them!**

Look at verse 4. ****"God will wipe every tear from their eyes. He will conquer death, and grief, and crying and pain...."*** (Revelation. 21:4)³

We cannot avoid times of struggle. But we can look past them. God has been at work in the past, there for us at every point of our need.

The rest of verse 4 and verse 5: ****"The old order of things is passing away. 'Behold - I am making all things new!'"*** (Revelation. 21:4b-5)⁴

God is already at work to heal our hurts and write a new future! That's good news whether you live in the second century under the oppressive government in Rome – or whether you live today where you never know from day to day what you should worry about.

*God is with you! And he will always be with you! Keep your life focused on that promise and you'll be looking the right place. And because God is with you - you can lean into these Biblical promises:

Joshua 1:9 ***"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."***

Matthew 28:20 ***"Observe all that I have commanded you. And remember, I will be with you always..."***

Romans 8:39 ***"Nothing in all creation can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."***⁵

Join me in prayer.

² Revelation 21:3, paraphrased by the author.

³ Revelation 21:4, paraphrased by the author.

⁴ Revelation 21:4b-5, paraphrased by the author.

⁵ All adapted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.