

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!
Revelation 22:12-17, 20

¹² Look, I am coming soon and my reward is with me, to repay each one according to what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. ¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the Tree of Life and so that they may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs, that is, the sorcerers, the adulterers, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. ¹⁶ I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star. ¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears this say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who wants the water of life take it as a gift. ²⁰ The one who testifies about these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

In our Gospel reading, Jesus prays that we might all see glory before the throne of God. In the Scripture before us we join our voices with John that the time might come when we do see that glory. Most people in our world either dread or try to ignore the final day. We eagerly hope and earnestly pray for the final day to come. We also pray that our Lord would come daily as the Morning Star to dispel our darkness. We are praying that he will come daily to wash us clean and to quench our thirst. He answers that prayer not by his return in the clouds. His answer comes to us through his means of grace to preserve and strengthen our faith. We need that in a world where the dogs on the outside are constantly barking for us to join them. How tempting that call of the wild is to our sinful nature. How urgently we must pray that Jesus come daily until the day he makes his final coming to take us home. So we join John in praying: Amen, Come, Lord Jesus! Come daily to preserve my faith. Come at last to take me home.

Our Savior tells us, "*Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the Tree of Life and so that they may enter through the gates into the city.*" In chapter 7 the saints before the throne are described as people who have "*washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*" (7:14). Those with a place in paradise are those who through faith have made the obedience of Christ their own. Through Christ's perfect obedience in life and in death, they have gained a right to eat from the tree of life and to enter by the gates into the city. Through faith we became children of Abraham. We are members of the 12 tribes whose names are inscribed on those gates. How blessed for all who inhabit that city. They have eternal life.

But not all will reach that blissful place. *Outside are the dogs, that is, the sorcerers, the adulterers, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*" John uses the word dogs to describe unbelievers. They are guilty of sorcery. They try to seize God's control over his creation. They try to make the Almighty do their will. All sin reflects the basic lie that the fathers of lies introduced in Eden. It is the lie that declares, "I am my own god and I can do as I please. Adulterers and murderers have lust and hatred in their hearts. To such sins all of us must plead guilty. Damnation is certain for those who die in their sins. Such sinners will have no share in the tree of life. They will not inhabit the holy city. They have rejected faith that receives the forgiveness that the Lamb of God earned for

them when he took away the sins of the world. If we had not had our robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, or had the obedience of Christ become our own by faith, we still would be running with that pack of unbelievers.

How different it is for believers, as our Lord points out. *I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star.* These words are not spoken to John alone. The pronoun *you* is plural in form. These words are for the members of the seven churches first listed in chapter one. But it's also to the members of all Christian congregations of all time. To you and to me, Jesus sends his angel to make his revelation known. In this verse Jesus describes himself as both God's Son and David's son. As the Root of David he is David's Creator. He's the source of David's being. Yet David was also his ancestor. These words set before us the two natures in Christ. He is the God-Man. As God he is David's root. As man he is David's offspring. He is the morning star in the east. As that star makes a clear proclamation of the coming of a new day, so is the coming of Jesus into the world. To those who know him as Savior comes the sure promise of a great, new eternal day, never again to be followed by a dark night.

To the glories of that new day, he then invites all to come. *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears this say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who wants the water of life take it as a gift.* He sent his Spirit to establish his church on earth. Through the Spirit and the church, Jesus issues his invitation to all: Come! There are no restrictions here. People are simply invited to come. The great mission of the church is described in the simplest terms. Those who hear the invitation are to pass it on to others. Everyone who has heard the invite to the marriage supper of the Lamb is to extend the call to those who have not heard it. So the invitation is handed down from generation to generation and from nation to nation. The time is near. This is urgent. The promise of blessings to those called to the marriage supper encourages us to carry it on with all our might.

No one is excluded from salvation except for those who feel no need of it and do not want it. Those who do thirst for salvation have learned to see their great need for the water of life. They begin to feel that thirst as they hear that sinners are dogs who must be kept outside the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. Instead they will be cast into the lake of fire. All must wash their robes in the cleansing flood that flows from the fountain opened on the cross. If they are thirsty, they are welcome to come. If they want it, they can have it without further conditions. It is theirs as a free gift.

These visions of heaven that John is privileged to see bring us comfort and hope. We know how sin infects us daily. We know how unworthy we are of anything good from our God. The psalmist reminds us: if God were to keep record of our sins we could never stand before him (Psalm 130:3). But God's Lamb was slain. And his blood has cleansed our every sin. We're no longer dogs. We're dearly loved, children of God with a glorious inheritance that lasts an eternity. All given to us freely by our gracious God.

So we thank our Lord for coming to us daily through word and sacrament to preserve our faith in him. It's a faith that lays a claim to the holy life our Savior lived for us. It's a faith that holds tight to the cross where he sacrificed himself for everyone. As he preserves my faith daily, I look forward to the last day when he will come to take me home. But how long must we wait?

Jesus says, *"Look, I am coming soon and my reward is with me, to repay each one according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.* Since our Lord wishes to strengthen and prepare the church for difficult days between Jesus first coming and his return, he closes his book with his promise to return soon. His reward he freely grants to all who trust in him. Those who see him as Redeemer and not just as Judge have nothing to fear when he repays each one according to what he has done. All that will be on our account on that day is the righteousness of our Savior. The next words of our Savior take us back to the opening chapter. With these words Jesus claims eternity as one of his qualities.

This year we are celebrating a momentous event in the Christian church. 1700 years ago a church council met in the city of Nicea and what came out was an important document that we still use it in our worship today. In fact, we spoke it together immediately following our reading of Scripture. It's the Nicene Creed that was written in 325 AD. It's a statement of belief that the Scriptures teach about God. It combats the errors of a false teacher named Arius. Arius taught that the Son of God is less than or inferior to the Father. We still use this creed because we believe "in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made..." May we treasure it and defend the truths that our God has preserved in his holy word.

Twice in the previous context the Savior had announced his imminent return for the salvation of his church. John now singles out that promise as being of special significance. *The one who testifies about these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!* These things are what's written in the whole book. The one who gives the testimony is Jesus. He sent his angel to bear witness to these things. John reminds us that Jesus will most assuredly come. He has given us that promise. And when he comes, he will forever deliver his people from present sufferings and from any danger that threatens them in this world. He will bring them safely to the holy city.

The last words of our Savior in Scripture bring us his final promise to come soon. John cannot help but respond to that with another prayer. It is an urgent prayer of faith in which we can all join in. May he come soon to defeat those who attack his church. May we be led to pray this earnest prayer of faith and speak it every day of our lives. Come, Lord Jesus, daily to preserve my faith. Come, Lord Jesus, at last to take me home. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.