

**Third Sunday of End Time – Saints Triumphant**

November 17, 2013

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Revelation 22:1-5

***Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. (NIV)***

When you are sitting at the movies do you enjoy the previews? As you catch glimpse after glimpse of coming attractions do you see some things that catch your eye? Perhaps you even find yourself saying, “*Oh, that looks good!*” or “*I’d like to see that one.*” For some reason I kind of like those previews, and I usually see one or two that look good to see. I don’t end up seeing most of those movies, but for the moment the previews drew me in.

Those previews are similar to what we are given here in many places in Revelation. This is especially true when it comes to heaven. We catch glimpses. We are shown some coming attractions. We get just some small samplings and pictures of the real thing. On this Saints Triumphant Sunday, as we get another glimpse, I pray we are moved to respond with hearts that yearn for and say: **Heaven – I want to see that!**

This revelation the apostle John is given here is part of one of the longest previews we have of heaven. John saw a new heaven and a new earth. An angel took John away to a mountain great and high and there the apostle saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. John saw the angel measuring this city. This city was breathtaking, “***like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.***” The city was pure gold and decorated with every precious jewel. Nothing impure was there or will ever enter it. Now the preview continues. “***Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse.***”

What a sight John is given! I want to see that! The scene here although not identical is similar to that of the Garden of Eden. There is the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and Christ down the middle of the city. Yes, in heaven every thirst will be quenched. On each side of the river stands the tree of life. In Eden there were the two trees – the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. But in heaven there is only the tree of life – sin and death will never enter it. The tree of life bears twelve crops of fruit, yielding fruit every month. The number twelve is symbolic and a number used often for the church. Think of the twelve tribes of Jacob and the twelve apostles. In heaven the Church will no doubt enjoy the

abundance of God's grace and blessings. All their suffering will be over – ***“the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”*** All sin and its terrible effects will be gone – ***“no longer will there be any curse.”***

Doesn't this preview of heaven have you saying – I want to see that? I can't imagine it. The peace, the rest, the safety, and the security of living in this place goes beyond what I have ever experienced or can even comprehend. How can we imagine living in a place where there is only pleasure, a place where you will never suffer anymore, and a place where sin does not exist? The best part is still coming. ***“The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”***

The best part about heaven is we will live with God. We will live with Jesus. We will see God face to face. There will never be another doubt or question that we belong to Him – ***“his name will be on their foreheads.”*** By no means will heaven be a place of boredom – ***“his servants will serve him.”*** I can't tell you how we will serve but it will be a joyful service. Our worship will be perfect and with our whole hearts – there will be nothing false about our praise and service. In heaven, there will be no more night and we will not need the sun, for the glory of our Lord will give us light. And there we will reign – forever and ever.

As I looked at these words this last week I kept thinking of my grandpa who was called this past year to heaven. If you have loved ones who went to heaven this last year, or previous years, these words remind you also why our tears are not for them. They get to see and experience all this. How are we able to look at this preview and not cry out - *“heaven – I want to see that!”* And by God's grace one day you and I will. It is also important to remember on Saint's Triumphant Day why you and I are triumphant not just right now here on earth but forever one day in heaven. It is important to understand we had no part in winning the victory. All we do is put ourselves under God's curse – for cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law. (Galatians 3) All we can understand is living in a ruined world because of our sins. At times we even foolishly cling to the things of this sinful world for on our own that is the best we could ever try to attain – temporary pleasure. On our own the best we could earn eternally is hell.

I think that is why in all these glimpses of heaven John keeps seeing the Lamb. For the only reason we are triumphant is because of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. We will live in heaven where there will no longer be any curse because Jesus became a curse for us when He hung on the cross with our sins. As it is written, ***“Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”*** (Galatians 3) We will live in heaven in holiness because we will wear the righteousness of our Savior – the same righteousness He gave us to wear at our baptisms. We will reign forever and ever because just as death could not hold our Savior neither will it hold us! Don't you want to see that?

I want to share something very personal with you this morning. I think after being part of this family here for over 12 years I can share what is in my heart. I don't know if I can put into words my emotions over the past few days – they have been tough and I expect they will continue to be. I'm praying constantly for God to guide me in my deliberation of whether I continue to serve here or somewhere new. I long for peace as I carefully consider where I might do my small part of serving my Savior in His great kingdom.

So once again Saint's Triumphant comes at the perfect time – the sight of it refreshes the weary and oppressed! This day reminds me once again what the public ministry is all about. I see this glimpse of heaven and realize I want to see that! I want all of you to see it with me – whether I stay here or go somewhere else. I want us to be where there is no more suffering, and where there is no more curse. I want us to live in the place where God is our light, where we will see Jesus face to face, and where there is no more night. I want us to have forever together. I want us to keep hearing our Savior's Word which keeps giving us previews of what He has prepared for us. I guarantee this is one time we can be certain that the real thing will way outdo all the previews! Amen.