

Prayer of the Day:

Father of lights, every good and perfect gift comes from you. Inspire us to think those things that are true and long for those things that are good, that we may always make our petitions according to your gracious will; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Alleluia. (John 14:23)

Sermon Text:

Brothers and sisters, if you are anything like me, passages like this one just kinda pull the stress of the world from your shoulders for a moment. When I sit down to ponder them, I can feel the blood pressure release a bit as peace and calm come rushing in, yes, even in a world that so often lacks all of it. As John tells us about the revelation he was given on the island of Patmos this morning, we get to see a little bit of heaven and through it **The Glorious Joy that Awaits Us All.**

I have often called Revelation the children's pop-up book for the New Testament. Instead of straight prose like Genesis or Matthew, instead of poetry like Psalms, God communicates with the people of John's day in grand and loft imagery to tell the same history we have heard over and over again in the pages of God's Word. As we turn the pages, the pictures that repeatedly pop up remind us of the very same theme of the rest of Scripture, Jesus wins! And because Jesus wins, so do we! I say "we" because of the 12 gates made of 12 massive pearls. You see there were 12 tribes of Israel and 12 Apostles and so 12 becomes the picture of the Church, all those who believe in Jesus. We are all here in this great city.

I know it often doesn't look like we are winning in our world today. Jesus even told those disciples as much in the Gospel lesson when He said they would weep and mourn while the world rejoiced (John 16:20) but dear friends our grief will turn to joy. And this what it looks like.

I'm going to skip over the streets for just a second, we'll be back. Instead, we are told this city, our heaven has no temple. That may seem strange at first but let me ask why you come to this place. I'm sure there are a million periphery reasons we might give for why we walk into this building but I pray the primary one is as simple as it is similar. It's because here we see Jesus. Here are Word, Water, and Supper and where they are present so is Jesus. Jesus who richly and freely dispenses forgiveness, new life, and salvation the Joy and Peace of every Christian.

That makes buildings like this obsolete in heaven. Why? *Because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.* Jesus is here. It's the same reason we no longer need the sun or the moon at night. When God is present the glory that so freely and logically emanates from Him is more than

Text: Revelation 21:21-27

²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. ²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

enough light to guide our waking and sleeping. So no more scorching heat to wither up plants and burn skin, no, *the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.*

Now though let's go back to the gates of pearl and the streets of glass and gold. The substance itself is a display of opulence, richness, and grandeur but there is more to the picture. Each one is a reflective surface bouncing the light of the glory of God throughout the city and turning it into one giant beacon of God's glory and so ... ²⁴ *The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.* ²⁵ *On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.* ²⁶ *The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.* There is a whole other sermon here on evangelism and letting our lights shine or perhaps better said, letting Christ's light reflect off of us in the world around us. It's often noticed! It's appreciated!

Oh, and the gates never need to be shut because peace reigns here. The nations that stream to them are not threats nor would they ever want to be. War, bloodshed, strife these are all gone. This picture is nothing more and nothing less than **The Glorious Joy that Awaits Us All.**

I love the picture, which to me has always resembled one giant party in heaven. It calms my anxious soul and provides peace in a world ravaged by sin. Ah, but then as soon as we say that word, there is something that is not allowed in this place. *Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

At first glance, we might just continue to bask in the glow of a world untouched by sin and unaffected by its dreadful consequences and rightfully so. But again, if you are anything like me at least at some point the truth works its way to the surface. If sin doesn't belong here nor anyone who has sinned, then while the nations may stream through the gates, will the angelic bouncers stop me?

The answer is that they most certainly should. My sin, my wrongdoing, my arrogance, and pride, these would only tarnish the brilliant and reflective streets of this place as my filthy sinful feet step upon them. Sin doesn't have any place in this city and so I, you do not belong here either at least by nature, at least by our thoughts and words and deeds.

However, take a second look at the way Jesus is referred to throughout this section. His picture is important as well. He's the Lamb. A different John, John the baptist, cried out the significance of this picture best when he saw Jesus approaching, "*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" (John 1:29)"

It's not a joyous image but it is an image that brings us joy. Jesus would be the lamb sacrificed for sin. On the cross, He would provide the perfect life and the innocent death that was required to pay for your sins and mine. In His holy and precious blood, we are sanctified, purified, and cleansed. Connected to Him in the water of Holy Baptism sin is washed away and faith is given that I might have all that I need to enter the city, in fact, I am a resident as a member of the holy Christian Church. The Lamb Himself has written my name in the book. There is nothing left to do nothing at all save to bask in **The Glorious Joy that Awaits Us All.**

Brothers and sisters, if you're anything like me, you need passages like this one. Our sin has made a mess of the world in which we live. There are days, months, and sometimes whole years that are anything other than peaceful and joyous. So today, God sits us down with the popup book and once again shows us the sinless reality for which we yearn. Dear friends, Jesus wins and so we win. Yes, take a minute and just take it in, **The Glorious Joy that Awaits Us All.** Amen.