

Prayer of the Day:

Almighty God, your Son our Savior was taken up in glory and intercedes for us at your right hand. Through your living and abiding Word, give us hearts to know him and faith to follow where he has gone; 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. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Alleluia. (John 14:18)

Sermon Text:

Well here we sit. Today we are between two great Festivals of the Church. Thursday was Ascension. 40 days after Jesus' resurrection from the dead, he ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father to rule all things and from there to come and judge the living and the dead on that final day. 50 days after his resurrection, that's next Sunday, Jesus would send the Holy Spirit who appeared in tongues of fire on the heads of the disciples. Some have referred to it as the birthday of the New Testament Church.

As we wrap up the Easter season, the cry of the church begins to change. For six weeks we called forth Alleluia! He is risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! While that cry always resonates in the halls of Christendom, another is just beginning to be heard. **AMEN! COME, LORD JESUS!**

Here's an experiment worth trying. Just randomly out of the blue whisper to someone, "The police are coming!" Hopefully, the response will not be full blown fits of panic but a question, "Why?" Maybe, the gossip in us even wants to know if it's because of something someone we know did or worse maybe, the sinner in us says "they're coming for you!" Today, Jesus says, "*Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.*" Does the sinful flesh begin to quake because we know that we have not done all that God told us to?

What about that list that Jesus gives? ¹⁴ "*Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.* ¹⁵ *Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.* We want to be in that first sentence, white robes and open gates but we know the truth. Magic arts can be anything from practicing it with the local

Text: Revelation 22:12-17, 20

12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone 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, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, 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, and the bright Morning Star." 17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life... 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Wiccan to glorifying it with our entertainment choices. Sexual immorality covers every offence from the horrors of human trafficking to the eye which lingers too long, or at all, while out in public or on the computer screen (Matt. 5:28). Murder is not only the blood which finds its way onto our hands but also the hatred we harbor in our hearts (1 John 3:15). Idolatry occurs not only when I make a wish while rubbing the fattened belly of a Buddha but also when I find my security in green paper or popularity (1 Tim. 6:6-10). Loving and practicing falsehood, we live in a world which tells us that it's always someone else's fault and when we don't like what God says to us well, that goes double for him! Truth be told, if I belong to only one group or all, I belong with the dogs, outside the gates, languishing in the fires of hell.

Oh, but pause there for a moment. Again, as always, it's of critical importance to pay attention to the words which our Savior speaks. Notice that Jesus doesn't say "I am coming soon and **YOUR** reward is coming with me." Instead, Jesus says "*I am coming soon and **MY** reward is coming with me.*" This is the reward Jesus has earned **FOR US**. And before we can talk about what Jesus has earned, we should probably focus on what He has done.

The Sunday after the Ascension, Jesus' entire earthly ministry sits in the rearview mirror. Born in Bethlehem, He grew in wisdom and in stature, and was like us in every way except for one rather major exception. He never belonged in the second list. He was sinless and perfect when we were not (Hebrews 4:15). He then allowed Himself to suffer at the hands of those who did belong to the list, shown through their actions during the course of that one holy week and even their entire lives that Jesus might speak of all of us sinners who drove Him to the cross, *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing* (Luke 23:34). The Resurrection begins to glimmer with the golden rays of the reward and the ascension shows us the throne planted firmly in glory of heaven. What was it the Jesus prayed in our Gospel today? *Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.*

The police are coming! That phrase sounds different to the hostage trapped in a room with a madman. Words which at one time may have brought trepidation now offer instant hope and relief in a terrible and difficult situation. *Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me.* Those words sound different to people who have been rescued from the bonds of sin, death and devil. They mean my Savior is coming, bring with him what He has earned for me. Oh, and something else He promises to take us home.

That prayer of Jesus in the garden also included some words about what we are to be doing here in this world. Jesus said, *I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.* That's work which we gladly do in thanks for everything that God has done for us. It's work which serves as proof that you and I actually believe in this Jesus, proof for us and for those around us.

But it's not always easy work. Sometimes we run into obstacles and sometimes we meet opposition. When we do it's easy to feel defeated and as if our work is in vain. In fact, Satan will use that to try and get us to stop all together. He'll even tempt us to toss aside our Savior, telling us that He isn't in control, doesn't have a clue, maybe doesn't even exist. The dogs are barking and they want us either to run in fear or to join in.

Jesus will have none of it! Do you notice how our Savior emphasizes his divinity, the fact that he is God and the power that goes along with it, in our lesson? "¹³ *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.* ... ¹⁶ *I, Jesus, have sent my angel to*

give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” He is the promised Messiah, truth from all eternity and into all eternity and He sends us help. His angel or messenger carries His testimony, the great gospel which we have already discussed. Because these truths come from Him, because they are backed by Him, they are as eternal and unchanging as He is.

What does that mean? Regardless of the traps and snares of Satan, as you and I remain focused on the message of our Salvation, though the gift of faith we’ll have countless opportunities to discuss in the coming weeks, Jesus Himself makes sure we are His. Through no work of our own, but entirely by the might and muscle of Jesus Christ, a reward which **HE** won is given to **US**! He is going to take me to be with Him. I will see Eden restored, eat from the tree of life, stand forever in the perfection of heaven and no amount of suffering, no obstacle in life’s path can take that from me. Even death must admit defeat and Lucifer be named a loser, for when Jesus announces His return, those are not the words of the people who are taking me to prison but the words of my rescue party, as He hastens to take me home away from the struggle here with sin.

For 10 days between the Ascension and Pentecost the Church sat waiting for what would happen next. As the Church active and watchful in the End Times, we find ourselves waiting as well. While we wait, we cry the truths of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter and Ascension. While we wait, ¹⁷ *The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. ...* ²⁰ *He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”* **AMEN. COME, LORD JESUS!**