



Sermon Growth Guide

October 29, 2023

Home is Coming

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Lead Me Home - Home is Coming

Revelation 22:1-17

Key Verse: Revelation 22:17

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let everyone who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

Big Idea: God is undoing death and preparing a home for us filled with peace and joy.



Foundations

The book of Revelation is the last book of the Bible and is also the last word in the history of the world. This book has had a storied trail of interpretation. John Calvin never got around to writing a commentary on it and Martin Luther thought it shouldn't be in the Bible. But it is, as it says, "trustworthy and true" and it should be read and taken in. It should fill us with hope.

But some are scared away by images of destruction; others by overwhelming metaphors; and others consumed by trying to figure out the date of the Lord's return. Revelation, however, is a powerful accounting of the fulfillment of God's promises and a comforting assurance to believers about our forever home.

Reading this passage dazzles us with what God is doing and will do. We are overwhelmed at the new creation in which we will live. And we are almost becalmed when we realize that evil and death will be no more. This is the life we have been longing for.

Beyond the dazzle is the most amazing thing—the voice of God calling us...inviting us to share in this place filled with an abundance of everything that is life-giving. And it is given to us as a free gift. We simply receive it.

Understanding God's Word

Read together Revelation 22:8-9.

In this passage, we hear the voice of John telling us of his first reaction to the visions the angel has shown him. He is so overcome that he falls on his knees to worship the angel. He is sternly instructed to stop it and to worship God.

John is a devout follower of Jesus, suffering for his faith. And yet, he surrenders to the messenger. How and why do you think mature believers can often worship the gifts instead of the Giver?

Applying God's Word

One commentator has said that "what God has done requires a moral response and that in every book there is something to keep and something to obey."

As you read Revelation 22:1-17, what do you discover that you need to keep and that you need to obey?

Witnessing God's Word

We live in a world filled with despair. How can your understanding of the eternal promises of God enable you to show others that there is hope—great hope for us in Jesus.

Sometimes when a new thing is on the way we let the old thing go. My son Jack had a new iPhone coming. He knew it was coming, so he let the old iPhone take some hits. He just took the Otterbox off and let it ride. By the time he got his new one, the old one was shattered with pieces of glass coming off the face. He cut his finger trying to swipe something. That is not how we should think of the new heavens and the new earth. We should see it more like caring for a garden until the gardener returns. I wish the garden looked better than it does, don't you? Fires burning, smoke, weeds and piles of trash in the corners, blood spilled on the soil. Still, the Gardener comes saying, "Behold, I make all things new!" Jesus will come up beside us, and we will wish we could have done more to make this place beautiful, but I hope we will hear, "Well done. Thank you for standing for me. Now, let's get all this put right, as beautiful as a city of gold come down from heaven." It's not just about us going to heaven; it is about heaven coming to us. **Home Is Coming.**

We are finishing a series we started in Genesis in August. We looked at the whole story of salvation under this theme, **Lead Me Home**. I hoped we would not only understand the good news of the gospel a little better but learn to share it a little better. Christianity gets truncated into a shrunken gospel: You're bad; God is mad, but Jesus took your beating. Is that really the good news? No. Or is Christianity an exercise in self-righteousness and moral superiority? A self-congratulating people gathered up on Sundays to revel in being right when others are wrong, particularly because they believe being right means a ticket out of this world and away from these people. "You Christians and your sin and shame, your lack of love and flight from pain. Who needs it?" But that is not the good news of the gospel at all. The Bible tells a story of a loving God who made this world as a celebration, who loved this world even when it rebelled against

Him, who sent His own Son into this world to save it at the cost of His own life, and who, finally, is working to set it all right again full of justice, full of peace, full of love, full of joy, full of life and beauty forever. Can we tell that story?

Here is your final conversation starter. Did anyone collect them all? Gold star. Did you try any of them? Here's the last one: "I can't wait to *really* get home." What do you mean "really"? I mean we all long for home, and it means so many things to so many of us, and it stirs up so much in us just to say the word "home." But what I mean is whatever we feel of home in this world is just a hint of what that word really means. We are not home until we are home with Jesus Christ. You are not home until you are at peace with God. When you are at peace with God, you can begin to be at peace with this world, at peace with your neighbor and at peace with yourself. But even then, when you have a thriving relationship with Jesus, walking with Him as your Savior and Lord, feeling His Holy Spirit within you healing every wound and filling up every gap, even then, you are not yet home. To be really home is when home comes to us, when heaven comes down, when all things are set right. No more pain. No more tears. Home is coming.

It looks like a river of life. "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." (Revelation 22:1-2) Sin and disobedience brought death and pain. This river is an endless flow of healing and life from Jesus Himself who stood up once in Jerusalem and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." (John 7:37-38) There is a tree nourished by this river: "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.” (Revelation 22:2) The Tree of Life. That rings a bell, doesn’t it? Wasn’t that in the Garden of Eden? God’s fruit for eternal life. When Adam and Eve disobeyed, it was the Tree of Life they lost, “lest they eat and live forever,” God said, and an angry angel was posted with “... a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.” (Genesis 3:24) Now here it is lining the streets, God’s fruit for eternal life. Its leaves are for the healing of the nations. Ezekiel saw this river. He went in ankle deep, then waist deep, then chest deep and the deeper he went the fuller the life: “...where the river flows everything will live...Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river...Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.” (Ezekiel 47:9,12) Don’t go ankle-deep. Jump in! What’s holding you back?

A crystal clear river, healing for nations, the Tree of Life. It sounds like everything lost is being returned. It sounds like the curse is lifted. Yes. “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.” (Revelation 22:3) No more curse. Do you see all that is being undone? Samwise Gamgee’s question, “Will everything sad become untrue?” No more curse. No more separation from God. God sits right in the city on his throne because the whole city is the temple, the whole city is filled with the presence of God. The infinite breach is closed. Immanuel, God with us.

You can even look God in the face. “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.” (Revelation 22:4) When Moses asked to see God on Mount Sinai, God said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.” (Exodus 33:20) He hid Moses in the cleft of a rock, laid his hand over him and passed by. Now we see him face to face. His name shines on our foreheads. How many labels do we use for ourselves? I like to wear a hat from Scheels. I got

it for free. I used to wear Patagonia. We have so many labels. I’m black; I’m white. I’m rich; I’m poor. I’m gay; I’m straight. I’m Presbyterian; I’m Baptist. I’m American; I’m Texan. (You know who you are). No more labels. Can you imagine? Only one thing matters; on our foreheads gleams the name Jesus.

“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.” (Revelation 22:5) Home is coming. In one paragraph, every effect of the curse is undone. Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation. In one paragraph everything that went wrong is reversed, restored and renewed. And we serve the Lord gladly. We don’t even want sin anymore. We don’t even want evil things anymore. We are free from those useless desires and all the pain they caused. We serve the Lord freely with His name over us. Tim Keller asked in a sermon, what if God had shown Adam and Eve all that would happen because they ate the fruit? “I see you’re thinking of eating fruit from the tree I told you not to eat. Can I just show you a quick video?” Millenia of human suffering and pain and death. They never would have eaten! That’s how it will be for us. No interest. No need. No useless, base, selfish desires. Augustine wrote, “God will be the end of our desires... When he said through the prophet, ‘I will be your God and you shall be my people,’ what else was meant than, I will be their sufficiency; I will be all that men honorably desire: life, and health, and nourishment, and plenty, and glory, and honor, and peace, and all good things?” (Augustine, *City of God*)

No wonder we want this to come. We need it to come, and soon! And Jesus says He is coming soon: “Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll...Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.” (Revelation 22:7,12) Jesus is

coming. The Alpha and the Omega: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End...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.” (Revelation 22:13,16) Jesus is coming. He is the beginning and the end; the world was made through Him and the world comes to fruition in Him. He is both the root of David, the origin of the line of David, and the offspring of David. This story has been Jesus’ story. He is, and always will be, our bright Morning Star—the light of hope that never dies. John was tempted to bow down and worship the angel who showed Him these things. We are always tempted to worship the blessings rather than worship the blessing, to worship what God does for us when we must only and ever worship God, our bright Morning Star.

Home is coming. We long for it. We need it now. Jesus said He was coming soon. Soon is a relative term. Within the vision of Revelation are various periods of 1,000 years, various lifetimes for nations to rise and fall. But it wasn’t a mistake for Jesus to say, “Yes, I am coming soon.” We live in that expectation. In the meantime, we live. And these are the “mean” times aren’t they? In the mean times, we live, and we wait. In the meantime, worship God. In the meantime, let evildoers do their worst: “Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy.” (Revelation 22:11) Let the evil do evil; you continue to do good. They cannot derail what God is doing. They cannot stop His coming Kingdom. In the meantime, issue the call: Come all you thirsty and drink from the water of life! “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water

of life.” (Revelation 22:17) In the meantime, draw near to God and He will draw near to you. You thirst for God. You thirst for Jesus. When Jesus comes close; come close to Him. Now.

Why? Because, “Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.” (Revelation 22:15) Outside are they. Did anyone else read this with an, “uh-oh”? What about me? Don’t miss verse 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.” (Revelation 22:14) Blessed are those, happy are those, celebrating are those who wash their robes, cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. “Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. ‘Come now, let us settle the matter,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.’” (Isaiah 1:16-18) How? Only through the crimson blood of the Lamb. Only by the sacrifice of Jesus. Until then, in the meantime, tend the garden, take up the cause of justice, love one another deeply, worship God, walk as faithfully as you can.

Don’t give up. That’s what today is about, dear church. Let us not give up. We are in the mean times, and we are the church, the Body of Christ. Won’t you participate in the work of the church through giving? Won’t you commit to walking with Christ in these times? This Scripture doesn’t dull our thirst for the end times, it inflames it! God says, burn hotter, care deeper, long for it more, hunger angrier, thirst with a burning thirst. Say, “Come, Lord Jesus! Come, Lord Jesus!” Long for it. Hope for it. Hang on for it. Home is coming. Until then...