

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.”**

I’ll get right to the point this morning. Are you looking forward to Jesus’ return? I mean, I guess there’s a sense in which we’re *all* looking forward to it. We don’t know the calendar date for it, but it *is* a date on this world’s calendar. The angels told the disciples that right after Jesus’ ascension: “This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, *will come back* in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

But are you looking forward to that day with excitement? Our lesson this morning shows us that Jesus is. **“I am coming soon!”** he says twice, and you can almost hear the eagerness in his voice. Jesus calls himself the **Beginning and the End** in these verses. He’s the God who created a perfect world in the beginning, and he can’t wait to come back at the end to fix what sin has ruined and make everything perfect again.

And it’s not just Jesus who is longing for that; John did, too. Jesus says, **“I am coming soon!”** and John’s response is, **“Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.”** Is that you? Do you wake up each day saying, “Let this be the day, Lord.” Do you fall asleep at night praying, “Come tonight, Lord Jesus – wake me up with the sound of your trumpet.”

I think it’s safe to say that as Christians, we struggle with this – looking forward to Jesus’ return. For any number of reasons. Simple forgetfulness of his promise. Doubts that we’re ready for his return, or fears of what that day might bring, or a love for this life – there’s a lot that can lead us not long for Jesus’ second coming.

Which is why we need these verses. We’re ending our sermon series on Revelation today in a fitting way: With the ending of our bibles. You’re about to hear Jesus’ last recorded words in scripture; the last words he spoke to his church before his words that’ll raise the dead at his return. And they are words that are intended to keep us ready for it and live looking forward to it. Because he lives, “Come!” 1) That’s God’s earnest invitation. 2) That’s our eager expectation.

When you hear the first thing Jesus says here, maybe you’re wondering how anyone could ever long for his return. **Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give**

to everyone according to what he has done. Jesus who knows all I do will repay me for what I've done. That's a truth that strikes fear into our hearts. But Jesus doesn't say it to scare us. He says it so we examine our lives now, and repent. What *am* I doing? How am I living?

Because there will be some who are left outside of the city in eternal darkness on that day. And Jesus describes how they lived: **Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.** Maybe at first you don't see yourself in that list: I've never tried my hand at magic or murder! But remember what scripture says. The same second commandment that forbids **magic arts** also condemns me when I use God's name in vain. Losing my temper earns me the same punishment as a **murderer**, God says. Sexual immorality that happens in a bed and that which takes place in the heart? There is no difference in God's eyes. **Idolaters** aren't just people who worship false gods; it's us, when the true God takes anything less than first place in our lives.

Jesus calls *all* sin here **falsehood** – it's living a lie, that I am my own master and can do what I want. And Jesus' earnest warning is that those who **love** and continue to **practice** any sin will not enter the kingdom of God.

But if that warning has showed you *your* sins...if it's led you to repentance...if it's left you **thirsty** for the forgiveness that you can't get into heaven without...then hear God's gracious invitation: **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.**

Did you catch that? **Water of life** – forgiveness of sins, salvation, life with God forever – that's not a reward you earn by your works. It is as Jesus said: **my reward**. It's the reward that *Jesus* earned you by *his* work. God says it's a **free gift**, because Jesus in his love paid the price for it. He hints at that here: He calls himself **the Root and Offspring of David**. Yes, he is David's Root – David's source, David's God. But he is also David's descendant. In love for us, he became true man to save us. He lived the life of perfect works we couldn't, so he could gift that perfection to us. He suffered the punishment your sins deserved on the cross, taking them all away.

Now, the **Spirit** through the word earnestly invites. **Whoever** – because Jesus won salvation for all – **whoever is thirsty, come, take the free gift of the water of life. Whoever** – no matter how great and many your sins – come, **wash your robes** through faith in Jesus **so you may have the right to the tree of life and to enter the city.**

And by God's grace through faith, that's you. Sins washed clean in Jesus' blood. The **free gift** of salvation is yours. Because of that, it need not scare you when Jesus says, **my reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.** Through faith, the sins you've done are forgiven and gone. Through faith, Jesus' record of works is credited to your account. No, this is grace upon grace! Jesus says, "Soon I'll come and reward you for what I've done for you!"

But until then, the Spirit still earnestly invites: **"Come!"** God wants all people to believe and enjoy what Jesus has won. And he's not the only one doing the inviting: Did you notice? **The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"** The bride – that's all believers. That's you. You're inviting, too!

Maybe this is the only reason we would say to Jesus, “Don’t come back quite yet!” We have friends, family members, people in this community – who don’t trust in Jesus for salvation. And if Jesus returns today, they will be outside of the city forever. And yet Jesus won the **free gift of water of life** for them, too. And since he *is* coming back soon, doesn’t that lead us to invite more earnestly? To have that conversation with your friend or loved one today. To pour our time and resources into our church’s ministry as we share the gospel and say with the Spirit, “Come!” It’s God’s earnest invitation – may it always be ours, too.

But, “Come,” also expresses our eager expectation. Another name Jesus uses for himself here alludes to that. He calls himself **the bright Morning Star**. Do you know the star he’s talking about? It’s actually not a star by modern definition. It’s a planet, Venus. I remember seeing it a lot growing up in Minnesota’s dark winters. To get to school on time, we’d have to wake up well before sunrise. It’d be the brightest object in the sky just before dawn. We might not notice it much now, but in days before artificial lighting, when the dark brought with it all sorts of terrors, people longed for the sunrise. And hearts would lift when they saw the morning star: It’s appearing guaranteed dawn with its light and warmth was just around the corner.

Jesus calls himself the bright Morning star. He’s already appeared in this world’s story; he’s already shining. He lived, died, and rose again to take away our sins and win our salvation. And that appearing is what guarantees it for us: Dawn with its perfect light and warmth is just around the corner. We, who with eyes of faith have seen the Morning Star and what he’s done for us – our hearts lift, because we know a perfect new era will dawn with his return.

We can understand why John would long for that. He was living in a pretty dark night as he wrote this letter. He was in exile on a remote island for preaching about Jesus. His closest friends had all be put to death for the same. His congregations were being persecuted and were in danger of falling away. No wonder he would say, “**Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.**”

By contrast, our night can seem fairly bright at times. We rarely suffer more than mild discomfort for talking about our faith. The modern age has all sorts of artificial lights – technological advances that solve a lot of our problems. Advances in medicine so we don’t live in daily fear of death. As Americans, we enjoy unprecedented wealth: The poorest among us has creature comforts people in John’s day could only dream of. Maybe that’s part of our problem: Our night has become so good we don’t long for the day. We naturally gravitate toward the material, what we can see. The glories Jesus has promised, we can’t see; but this world we can, and when what we have and experience in it are pretty good, we fall in love with it and aren’t ready to part with it. “Come, Lord Jesus,” we think, “but not too quickly, because I’d really like to...”

So do you see one of God’s good purposes in allowing suffering into our lives? So often, our hearts’ highest hopes are petty and earthbound compared to the hope of eternity with Jesus. And so God uses suffering, from frustration at work to family problems to failing health, to purify our hope. To help us see things clearly –that, as good as this life can seem, this world is still under the darkness of sin and death. To help us look to the **Morning Star** and long for that day when he brings night to a close and ushers in eternity’s bright day.

It’s also why he gives us a preview of what that will be like. We’ve been seeing it in Revelation the past few Sundays: Thousands upon thousands of saints and angels singing the

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Pastor Degner
Revelation 22:10-17,20

Come; Your Reward is Found in Jesus
Lamb's triumph before his throne. No more hunger or thirst, for the Lamb will be our Shepherd. A new heavens and earth where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, just perfect and endless joy, for God himself will wipe every tear from our eyes. We'll live in the perfect beauty God always intended for us – bodies that will never wear out, souls forever free from sin.

God shows us how bright eternity's day will be so earth's joys grow dim in comparison. So that John's eager expectation and Jesus' eager expectation becomes ours. So that when our Savior says, "**Yes, I am coming soon,**" we say with greater longing, "**Amen. Come quickly, Lord Jesus.**" Amen.