

“Come, Then, O Lord Jesus”

(Revelation 22:12-17, 20 – Midweek Advent 3 – December 17, 2025)

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. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. ¹⁴Blessed 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. ¹⁵Outside 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.” ¹⁷The 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 ²⁰He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ, our Savior:

In these midweek Advent services, we have been contemplating Jesus’ three-fold coming as our Savior, using the words of our hymn. The first week, we discussed how “Once He came in blessing” to save us from all our ills, especially sin and death. The second week we discussed how “Still He comes within us,” as our risen Savior still comes to win us by His Word and dwell within us through faith. This week, we turn our attention to the last verse of the hymn where we sang confidently of our Savior’s coming again on the Last Day to take us to heaven: **“Come, Then, O Lord Jesus.”**

In our text Jesus says: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”* As the eternal and exalted Lord of the Church, He prepares us for His second Advent by saying: *“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”*

Our hymn verse echoes these thoughts as it begins: “Who by faith endureth Bright reward secureth.” As we await Jesus’ coming, how can we be confident that we will be among those who endure to the end, so that we will receive Jesus’ bright reward in heavenly glory? Especially, we may wonder about this when hear Jesus say He will *“give to everyone according to what he has done.”*

It may seem that Jesus is saying, “If you want to get into heaven, if you want to secure My bright reward, you will have to endure in doing good enough until I come.” This is the natural way of thinking in this world – that reward must come by merit. At this time of Christmas, many little children are led to think that the bright rewards of Christmas depend on how good they have been. This is what the popular song teaches:

You better watch out you better not cry
 You better not pout I'm telling you why
 Santa Claus is coming to town....

He's making a list, checking it twice;
 Gonna find out who's naughty and nice....
 Santa Claus is coming to town....

He sees you when you're sleeping
 He knows when you're awake
 He knows if you've been bad or good
 So be good for goodness sake!

Isn't this the basic teaching of the world's religions? If you are a good boy or girl, you'll be rewarded. If you aren't good enough, you'll miss out. Think of what this would mean if we were to take this world's theology and apply it to what Jesus says about His coming: "*My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.*" If it all depended on our goodness, there would be no real joy about Jesus' coming as our Savior the first time at Christmas. Nor could we have any real joy about His final coming on the Last Day with the reward of heaven. Who are we to merit any gift, let alone the gift of eternal life, if there were that "if you've been bad or good" clause attached to it?

As we think of Jesus' second coming, we are tempted to look for assurance that we will enter heaven's gates by comparing ourselves to those described in our text who will not enter heaven: "*Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*"

It would be easy to point the finger at others who fit this description. They are the ones practicing "*magic arts,*" caught up in the occult, black magic, fortunetelling, horoscopes, and all that steals away from trust in the true God. They are the "*sexually immoral,*" caught up in adultery, fornication, homosexuality, and all that steals away from the sanctity of marriage. They are the "*murderers,*" abortionists, proponents of euthanasia, and all that steals away from the sanctity of human life. They are the "*idolaters,*" who are caught up in the falsehood of world cults and religions. In our text, all who love and practice such unrepented sins are referred to, not as God's people, but as "*the dogs*" who will remain outside heaven's gates.

So it would be easy to think, "Well, at least I've done better than those kinds of people. I don't live such a sinful life. Not only should Santa reward me with many gifts, but so should Jesus. When He makes His list and checks it twice, He'll see by comparison that I haven't been so naughty, but instead rather nice."

But proudly comparing ourselves to others does not secure for us a place among the “*Blessed*” heaven. We may not openly commit some sins we see others doing. But to the all-seeing God, the sins in our hearts and minds are just as obvious and ugly. God sees idolatry whenever we love something or someone more than Him. God sees murder whenever we hate someone, hold a grudge, and wish evil on them. God sees sexual immorality whenever we fail to ward off lustful thoughts, or even when we speak or we laugh along with dirty jokes. God’s Word leaves no room for boasting. Romans 3:19 declares: “*Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*”

It is God who “sees you when you’re sleeping He knows when you’re awake; He knows if you’ve been bad or good.” His Law says nothing of bright reward; it only shows us our sin, and the condemnation we deserve.

So when Jesus says, “*My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done,*” we confess that we deserve no good gift. The difference between believers and unbelievers is not that we are without sin. The difference is repentance and faith. Unbelievers do not repent of sin, but continue to “*love and practice falsehood*”; yet they believe in their own goodness and merit. But as believers, by work of the Holy Spirit in us, we repent of our sins, confess them, hate them, and do not want to live in them any longer; and we believe in Jesus for forgiveness. Faith alone saves us, because faith clings to Him alone for our salvation.

This is why it is so important to understand what it means when we sing in our hymn: “Who by faith endureth Bright reward secureth.” It is not talking about our endurance in doing good enough to merit heaven. It is speaking of the endurance of faith. And our faith is not in our own goodness, but only in Jesus’ goodness – all He has done for us as our Savior. Our faith is in His precious blood shed on the cross, by which He washes away all our sins. Our faith is in His perfect righteousness, which He puts on us like a pure white robe making us fit for heaven.

Therefore Jesus says: “*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.*”

And by faith we pray: “*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. For You are the bright Morning Star. You are my only shining hope in the darkness of this evil age. You are my only shining hope in the darkness of my own sinful life. I thirst for Your Kingdom and Your righteousness. Come daily to wash my robe by Your blood. Come daily to keep me enduring in true faith, until You bring me finally through the gates of heaven.*”

Indeed, it is Jesus’ desire to come and help us, to give us endurance in the faith to the end. He comes to us with His Gospel promise saying: “*Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and*

whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.” Through His life-giving Word and Sacraments, Jesus quenches our spiritual thirst with the free gift of all He has won for us on the cross. In baptism, He washes us and renews us by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). In His Supper, as we partake of His Body and Blood, He forgives and strengthens us (Matthew 26:26-28). Through His means of grace, Jesus keeps us enduring in saving faith.

This is why we sing:

Come, then, O Lord Jesus,
From our sins release us;
Let us here confess Thee
Till in heav’n we bless Thee.

As we await Jesus’ coming on the Last Day, He wants us to be joyful about meeting Him, as a bride looks forward to seeing her groom on their wedding day. Why should we fear meeting our heavenly Bridegroom, when we know the unsurpassed love of Him who is coming for us? Ephesians 5:25-27 reminds us: *“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”* This is how our heavenly Bridegroom sees us: cleansed by His precious blood, clothed in His perfect goodness, holy and without blemish; and therefore ready to be brought into His heavenly wedding feast.

What a day of great joy it will be when we meet our Savior, our true Love. He too is looking forward to taking us into the glory He is preparing for us. As Jesus prayed before giving His life for us: *“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world”* (John 17:24).

Therefore, *“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.”* In our heavenly home all sin, weakness, trial, and suffering will be swallowed up by joy in our Savior’s presence. And we will bless His name forever!

So when He says, *“Behold, I am coming soon!”* we respond confidently: *“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”* Once You came in blessing to save us. Still You come within us to keep us in saving faith. “Come, then, O Lord Jesus” to take us home at last!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.