

Keep Your Head Up Jesus Is Coming Soon

A Sermon on Revelation 22:12-17, 20
Year C - Easter 7
8 - May - 2016

JJ¹

A little voice echoes through the house at midnight: "Mommy! I'm thirsty!" She responds, "I'll be right there, honey." What may seem like just a moment to mommy is an eternity to the child. "Mommy, I need you now. What's taking so long?"

The older we get, the more we start sounding like that little child all over again. But instead of calling out for our mothers, we call out to our Savior, Jesus, "Lord, where are you? What's taking so long? When are you going to return?" What is only a moment for Jesus, is a lifetime for us. As the struggle against sin, the terrors of Satan and the hatred of the world grows, we long more and more for Jesus' return. At the same time we're tempted more and more to give up and hang our heads low in shame. For the sixth week in a row, we turn to John's Revelation to receive the encouragement we need. Today, friends, **KEEP YOUR HEAD UP** because **JESUS IS COMING SOON**.

The visions have ended and John's angelic tour guide has left. And just as this amazing day of visions began, they end with Jesus coming to John and speaking to him directly. "Behold, I am coming soon!" Now we hear Jesus say "soon" and perhaps wonder, "What's Jesus' def-

inition of that word? It's been 2,000 years!" While the Greek word does mean "soon" or "quickly," it would help us not only to remember that God's view of time is different than our own, but also to consider that the word can be translated "without delay." God's plan, which he made in eternity and set into motion when he created the world, will not be delayed. Nothing will get in the way. Nothing stopped him when he came the first time. The Apostle Paul reminds us: "at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). And in the same way, Jesus reminds us at his ascension that the dates and times are set (Acts 1:7), and will be carried out according to his perfect plan.

When he does come, he says, "My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done." Jesus points to judgment day when he will come and sit on his judge's throne. And notice how he will judge. He will not judge and reward people *because* of what they have done, but *according* to what they have done. While you might not see a difference, there is. To reward *because* of what you have done means that you have earned it. But for Jesus to reward *according* to what you have done means that he rewards according to what you deeds re-

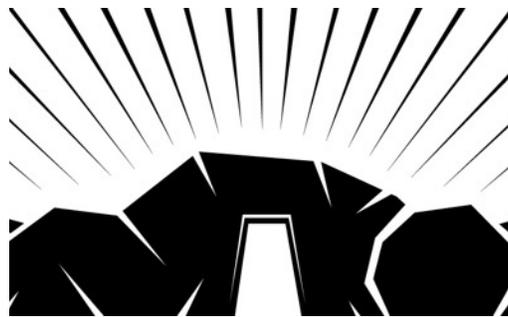
¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

flect. A heart of faith reflects itself in the good works it does out of love and thanksgiving for God. A heart of unbelief reflects itself through a life of disobedience. Hence Jesus' promise in chapter 2: "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

But how can we be certain that we will "have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates of the city"? Jesus tells us. "Blessed are those who wash their robes..." This brings us back to our third sermon where the angel told John that God's people "[wash] their robes and [make] them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). Our certainty is found in Christ, and him alone. He is the one who lived an innocent life for us. He is the one who suffered hell and died in our place. And through the gift of faith, all that Christ is and has done are made our very own. Those who receive Christ's righteousness through faith are those who "have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city."

But "Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." What a comfort to know that in heaven we will be at peace and not one wicked act or person will breach the gates of our heavenly home. Yet at the same time, this

list of outsiders, of dogs, also calls us to repentance since we all can find ourselves in this list. Maybe we haven't tried to control God and his creation with the devil's power, but we seek to make him do our will instead of submitting to his will. Our hearts lust and hate and hurt. We don't always give God the #1 place in our hearts. We lie. For these sins, for all our sins, we must plead guilty and turn to the Lamb of forgiveness. Otherwise we end up like Judas. Then we are left outside with the dogs who have no share in the tree of life.



To keep this from happening, Jesus himself provides all that we need. "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."

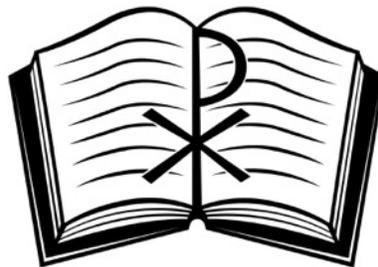
Christ gives us his holy Word which reveals that he is David's Root. That is, he is David's Creator and God. He is also David's Offspring. Jesus is that great Descendant who would come from David's line to save the world. His Word also shows us that Jesus is "the bright Morning Star." Through faith in him and his Word, Jesus bring us into his light so that we may see him and have the assurance that one day, in that new eternal day, we shall live with him where there will never be night!

Now notice the response of God's people when they receive Jesus' forgiveness and

are washed clean in his blood. "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 water of life."

This, friends, is how we as Christ's Bride respond to our Groom's love for us. We call out to all people, saying, "Come! It's here for the taking! Come and drink of the free gift of the water of life!" And how absolutely necessary that we do this. You see, our spiritual thirst is much like our physical thirst. If everything is working correctly in our bodies, you only know that you're thirsty when your body tells you. By nature, our souls aren't working correctly. Yes, we may notice the thirst but we can never know how bad it is and what great danger we are in. We also haven't a clue as to how to quench it.

A little child's body can tell the child it is thirsty, but they don't know yet how dangerous their thirst can be or how to properly quench it. Just think if you put two bottles in front of a two year old. One is a bottle of vodka, the other spring water. Except for the labeling, to the child they both look the same but one has dangerous, even deadly consequences if the child tries to quench his thirst with it. The child will only know what's good for him if his parent shows him and gives him what will give him life.



The same applies spiritually. The world offers all kinds of things to try and quench our spiritual thirst. But there is only one "water of life." All others will lead to death. And people are only going to know what the true "water of life" is if we bring it to them. Friends, that's how you came to be here today! The invitation was passed on from generation to generation and from nation to nation so that you would receive the "water of life." And the fact that we know the time is near for Jesus' return only adds urgency to our invitations. And to know what Christ has done for us and all the blessings which are ours now and eternally encourages us to carry that invitation with all our might in the Lord.

Friends, there are little spiritual children around the world and right here in our community crying out in the darkness of a spiritual midnight, "I'm thirsty!" And like a mother bringing her little one exactly what he needs to quench his thirst, friends, you have the only thing that will quench their spiritual thirst. But also make sure you keep on drinking the Word, "the free gift of the water of life."

Friends, Jesus says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" So **KEEP YOUR HEAD UP**. Keep your head up because soon the struggle will be over. Soon you'll be forever safe. Soon you shall rest. Keep your head up, and pray with John, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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