



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

December 10, 2008
Midweek Advent Worship
Revelation 22:12-18, 20
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Revelation 22:6-11
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 45

Amen, Come Lord Jesus

At any time in your life, did you ever say the words “are we there yet?” If you said them once, I bet, like Lays potato chips, you didn’t just say it once, did you? If you were in the back seat of a car going on a trip some place with your folks, you probably said, “Are we there yet” over and over to the point where I’m guessing you were a little obnoxious, don’t you think? Did you ever stop and wonder why we ask it so often? We used to go on trips every summer for two weeks or sometimes four weeks, driving everywhere. We’d spend a lot of hours in the car every day. I know my sister and I drove my dad nuts by saying “are we there yet” or “how much longer?” We asked it over and over. I think the reason we asked it over and over was because we knew that his answer wasn’t genuine. He just would say “pretty soon” so we would shut up and quit asking the question, right? But since you knew the answer wasn’t genuine, you kept asking it. You kept saying “are we there yet,” “how much longer,” “are we there yet,” “how much longer,” because you didn’t really believe the answer.

This evening these words from Revelation talked about God’s people saying “Amen” to God’s promise to come soon, saying “yes, it will be so” to express our confidence in what he says. So this evening it kind of shows us why we can say “Amen” to Jesus’ promise and why we don’t have to live in the “are we there yet” or “how much longer” with Jesus. And we can say “Amen” to this promise of our God because of the names that he uses for himself. He uses some very interesting names for himself that lead us to say “Amen, come Lord Jesus.” Then also we are reminded another reason why we say an “Amen” to this and don’t keep asking a question and express our confidence in it is because of what he has done for us and what he does for us.

In the Book of Revelation God gave John seven visions and the seven visions were all of the same thing. It was over and over looking at the same thing from a different point of view you might say. It’s really circular in nature and not linear. It goes over and over and the whole theme of the book is God wins, Satan loses. God keeps his people in the faith until the end and then he takes them to heaven.

Now at the end of the book, this is the last chapter, two verses before the very end of the Bible, Jesus lays out before us and Jesus’ angel lays out before us why we can say “Amen” to everything that was in this book and why we can express our trust for it. Jesus says, “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and

the Last, the Beginning and the End.” These names that Jesus uses for himself, one of them is up in our balcony in the window, Alpha and Omega, the first and the last letter of the Greek alphabet. It’s saying he is the source of all and he is the end of all. He is the beginning and the end, the first and the last. He is always there. He is the beginning of all things and he will one day be the end of all things, and you can believe it. He brought it into being and he will destroy all things at the end of time. We can trust his message.

He doesn’t change like we do. He doesn’t repeat himself over and over annoyingly like we at times do. He tells us what we need to know and he repeats that quite often because he knows how thick headed we are and how easily distracted we are. Especially at this time of the year when we get chasing our own tail. The only thing that’s always the same about us is that we don’t know what direction we are going in half the time at this time of the year. But our God is unchanging. His love doesn’t change. His love is constant. His promise of forgiveness is constant. We know this because he is the Alpha and the Omega.

He also uses another name for himself. He tells us, "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches." Why can you trust that it's true? "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." Stop and think a minute about that first name he uses—I am the Root and Offspring of David. Doesn't it sound kind of contradictory? Root could literally be translated the cause or the source. How can you be the source of David and at the same time be the Offspring of David? This is something that we would never understand. It's a spiritual truth we couldn't understand unless God's Spirit would open our minds to understand it and believe it. He is telling us, "You can believe what I'm saying because I am true God and I am true man. I am the Root of David. I caused him to have life. I am the One that knew him before time began; before the world was created, I knew my servant David. But not only am I the Root of David, I am the Offspring of David. I am true man. I became one of you. I lived among you. I lived in your place and was perfect where you couldn't be perfect. I am the exact Savior you needed—true God and true man, whose life and death could count for everyone and who, as man, could be under the Law in your place. I am before David and I am after David. I am the Root. I am the Offspring of David."

It's a mindboggling statement, but it's a name that he uses for himself to show us that we can trust what he says, because he has always acted in our best interest. He doesn't just put us off with a pad answer to get us to be quiet. He is telling us something incredible, something that is beyond understanding unless the Spirit leads you to believe it. That's what these names that he uses for himself at the end of the Bible do for us. They assure us that his word and his testimony is true and valid and we should sit up, perk up our ears and listen to it and focus on it and dwell on it and make it a part of our thinking, our being, our essence. It's one of the reasons we can say "Amen, come Lord Jesus" when he says he's coming soon, because of these names he uses.

He also tells us what he does for us. He tells us he's coming soon and he is going to come soon at the end of the world and his reward is with him and he will give to everyone according to what he has done. We might hear that and think that sounds like it's what you do that gets you into heaven. But if you look closely at what he says in the rest of it, it's quite clear he's not saying that it's your works that get you into heaven. He says, "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." "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." He had talked earlier in Revelation about "Blessed are those whose robes are washed in the blood of the lamb," that his life and his death in our place takes away our sin and that gives us the water of life, eternal life.

So what does it mean when he says, "I will give to everyone according to what he has done"? Scripture quite clearly says that without faith it is impossible to please God. I don't care what you do, how good you are, how noble you are, how much you help other people, if it's not done out of faith in Christ and out of love for God, it is sin. It's not pleasing to God. So only those who have faith are those who can do things that are pleasing to God and the only ones that have faith are the ones that the Spirit has worked faith in.

But where that Spirit has worked faith, it changes us. We live for God, not for ourselves. That's why he talks about "outside are the dogs"—the unbelievers, those who are still in their sins and who have not been washed by the blood of the lamb, those who still have clinging to them the sin of practicing magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. Those of us here this evening, have we committed some of those sins? Most certainly, but they don't cling to us because we've had our sins washed away in the blood of the lamb.

So we look forward and say "Amen, come Lord Jesus" because we know he comes not to judge us in a way that terrifies us. We are judged on the basis of who Jesus is and what he has done in our place, and we know that when he comes at the end of time, he will take us to be with him forever inside the city, the New Jerusalem, the home of righteousness where God lives with man. That's the Advent Coming that we focus on in the Second Article this evening.

But maybe we stop and think to ourselves, why do we focus on this during Advent? Why do we talk about the end of time? Shouldn't we be singing Christmas carols at this time of the year in worship? Shouldn't we be focusing on the manger? That's the reason for the season as we tell ourselves all the time.

The baby that was born in the manger was born so that he could come at the end of time. He wasn't born in the manger just so that we could ooh and ah over him being born in a manger. The true reason for the season is Christ coming in the flesh to take away our sins, Christ coming in the flesh to remove our sins and then Christ coming again at the end of time to bring us to the full redemption that is ours through having our sins taken away and spending eternity with God in heaven. That's the meaning of the

word "Advent." That's the coming we long for. It's easy to forget as we chase our tail at this time of the year.

As we are bombarded with syrupy sentimentalism, God wants us to lift our eyes a little farther and think about why Jesus was born and why the Spirit comes to us in Word and Sacrament so that we are prepared to meet him when he comes again.

Hymns: Gathering Rite, 9, 218 **Psalm of the Day:** Psalm 45 (page 83)

Special Music: 11:00 a.m. Grades 5-8 *Come, Come Emmanuel*

7:30 p.m. Choir *Carol for Advent*

Psalm Prayer: Lord God, you called the Church to be the bride of Christ and to listen always to the voice of the bridegroom. Anoint our hearts with the oil of joy that we may serve you in righteousness and sing your praises now and forever; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lesson: Revelation 22:6-11

The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

"Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

Sermon: Revelation 22:12-18,20

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

"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. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

"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."

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.

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.