

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin R. Eden

The Seventh Sunday of Easter
Saturday, May 15, 2010 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 16, 2010 at 8:00 a.m. & 10:15 a.m.

“Creation Has Been Restored”

Revelations 22:1-6, 12-20

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Our Epistle lesson today is the conclusion to John’s Revelation. As we have seen in the Epistle lessons this Easter season, throughout his Revelation, John witnessed many wondrous and glorious things. These visions have been interpreted in many different ways over the years. Certain people have even twisted the intended meaning of the vision and tried to change the message of the Gospel.

Jesus’ words to John are very clear for us as Christians. Christ gives us a glimpse of what the new Jerusalem will be like, but more importantly, Jesus tells us what He has done for us already. The gates to the new Jerusalem are already open for us. The location of the book of Revelation in the Bible is so well-placed.

This appointed lesson for today contains the final words of Holy Scripture. It is a perfect conclusion to how God has dealt with His people. The Garden of Eden of Genesis chapters 1 and 2 has been restored. The restoration of God’s perfect creation has been the focal point of God’s work with His people. It is what the entire Bible is all about. It is the history of God restoring creation.

A few weeks ago in our Epistle lesson, we heard Christ’s words

to John: "Behold, I am making all things new." This week, we hear the words, "Blessed are those who wash their robes." Those are words very reminiscent to those that Isaiah had spoken 700 years before Christ's birth. Isaiah also tells us that "though our sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." Through Christ's blood, God has "washed our robes and made them white."

Now, at the conclusion of God's Holy Word, Jesus tells us that because our robes have been washed, we have "the right to the tree of life." Creation has been restored; and we now have the right to the tree of life that Adam and Eve were prevented to eat from -- as they were cast out of the Garden following their Fall into sin.

God has given us a glimpse of this complete restoration of His perfect creation in our faith and worship. The forgiveness that Christ has won for us on the cross, "the free gift of the water of life" that Jesus often mentions: that is our ticket to the heavenly Jerusalem. That is the reason that we have the "right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city."

We have not yet experienced the heavenly Jerusalem, but the new Jerusalem is the Church. We are already inside the city gates. "The free gift of the water of life" is ours in Holy Baptism. Christ tells us that outside of the city, outside of the church "are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."

Jesus is telling the people of His Church that you are very different from the people outside these walls. Those people are dogs.

And our Lord's words were meant to be harsh. Dogs in Jesus day were viewed very differently than we view them today. Dogs were not pets. Dogs were wild. They lived outside of the city and fed on the garbage that was thrown outside the city wall. They were an unclean outcast animal.

Jesus is saying that outside the city gates of the new Jerusalem, the Church, are the outcast, the immoral, those who worship other gods. Jesus says, "You have nothing in common with them. You are the forgiven people of God who have experienced the water of life."

You were received into the family of the church through the life-giving water of Baptism. As a child of God, you now have nothing in common with those people outside of the city gates of the new Jerusalem.

However, Jesus says, "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." We have a responsibility to extend the invitation to those "dogs" outside the city. They are all dying of thirst, but most of them don't know it.

It is a hard thing that Christ asks us to do. He wants us to have nothing to do with the sinful lifestyle of the people outside. However, He asks that we do not completely separate ourselves from them, so that the Gospel might be shared. We are to be in the world but not of the world. With the temptation that is always there, this is a difficult task.

That is why we continually return to the Lord's Table. That is why we continually return to God's Word, that we might receive the strength that only God can give, and that we might complete such a

task. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we can share this message of the new creation.

From the beginning, God promised the coming of Christ. In our lesson today, we see the conclusion to God's action. Christ announces His second coming, and He tells us of His relationship to the world. Christ says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

Chapter One of John's Gospel tells us that through Christ all things were made. When the world was perfect in Genesis 1 and 2, Christ was there. He is the Beginning. Chapter 19 of John's Gospel shows how Jesus is the End. When Christ was on the cross, just before He died, He said, "It is finished."

Everything had come full circle. Satan was defeated. Creation was restored. Sin was forgiven. Through Christ all things were created; through Him that perfect creation has been restored. And as St. John records, we now have "the free gift of the water of life . . . and the right to the tree of life."

We have the free gift of forgiveness. We have the promise of eternal life. We have the promise that Christ is coming soon. So we too pray echoing the words of John: "Amen. Come Lord Jesus."
Amen.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!