

Sermon for Easter 7 (Series C)

Text: Revelation 22:12-17, 20

Preached on 06-10-2007

Introduction:

I don't know what your home-life was like growing up, but if it was anything like mine I'm sure that there was one phrase you dreaded hearing. If I was giving some attitude to my mother or caught doing something wrong, she would say, "Just you wait until your father comes home!" Those words usually meant that I was in trouble. Don't get me wrong. My dad was not a mean man by any stretch of the imagination. It's just that he was the one who dealt the just punishment that I rightfully deserved. And so, in most cases, the words, "Just you wait until your father comes home!" struck a good amount of fear in my heart.

Is there a parallel between how I felt about the imminent return of my father and how people today feel about the imminent return of Jesus Christ? There certainly doesn't seem to be. Not in today's world anyway. Most people simply deny that Jesus will ever return. They laugh and say, "That will never happen!" What about you though? How do you feel about the Lord's imminent return? If you had the power to choose the Day of His return, would you choose today, next week, or a hundred years from now? How badly do you want Jesus to come again? As long as our relationship with the Lord is what it should be, we can't wait for Jesus' Second Coming! We're so anxious for His return that...

Series Theme: We Sing Our Alleluias to the Resurrected Lord!

Today we sing our Alleluias because...

Theme: The Resurrected Lord Is Coming Soon!

Part I: A needed warning for unbelievers

Part II: A comforting promise for believers

Part I: A needed warning for unbelievers

Jesus' return is a needed warning to so many because, "**When He comes in His glory...All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats**" (Mathew 25:31-32). Here, at the end of His revealed Word, Jesus says the exact same thing, only using a little different analogy. Instead of speaking about sheep and goats, He speaks about dogs. He says, "**Outside (the Holy City) are the dogs**" (v. 15). The word used here for "dogs" is not the word for cute, cuddly house pets.

It refers, rather, to ugly, mean, wild mongrels, who devour whatever food they can find; who get into regular, vicious fights; and who hump (or have sex with) virtually anything that moves. Jesus used this term to describe the people who will stand before His judgment seat on the Last Day. It is a term that gives a needed warning to unbelievers!

Application:

The list of shameful, deceitful sinners that follows reveals who this term refers to. Jesus describes these dogs as, **“Those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood” (v. 15)**. In other words, all those who have ever followed Satan’s ways or fell victim to his temptations; all those who have ever jumped from bed to bed, treating their bodies as a “party-pass-around”; all those who have ever had so much as a lustful, hateful, or contemptuous thought towards someone else; all those who have ever allowed anything to come before worshiping the one, true God; all those who have ever used lies or deceit to cover up a dirty little secret - these are the dogs who are outside the kingdom of God.

To be a bit more direct, you and I are those filthy mongrels, scavenging to satisfy our every covetous, sinful desire. If we have ever thought, “I know that this is not what God wants me to do, but I’m going to go ahead and do it anyway”, we are nothing more than idolatrous dogs in God’s sight! And Jesus says that all dogs, **“Will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:12)**. Wow! Jesus’ words should certainly give pause to anyone who argues, “A loving God would never send anyone to Hell. Everyone will be in a better place when they die. All dogs go to Heaven.” No, that is not what Jesus says. Jesus says that all people are spiritually dead, blind, and enemies of God. By nature, then, we are dogs who deserve to be outside the Holy City, scratching and pawing at the gates to get in. But John tells us, **“Nothing impure will ever enter the Holy City of God, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful” (Revelation 21:27)**. What a needed warning for all unbelievers!

Transition:

Since we have committed the very sins that characterize the dogs in our text, what reason do we have to believe that God will not say to us, **“Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire” (Matthew 25:41)**; what hope do we have of ever gaining access to

God's Holy City? There is hope! It is not found in ourselves or what we have done, but solely in Jesus Christ and what He has done for us! So not only does Jesus' return serve as a needed warning for unbelievers. It also serves as...

Part II: A comforting promise for believers

Jesus tells us how He will judge between those on the outside and those on the inside of the Holy City. He 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"** (v. 14). In Matthew's gospel Jesus compared the kingdom of Heaven to a great wedding banquet. But when the King noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes, he had the man, **"Tied hand and foot, and thrown outside, into the darkness, where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth"** (Matthew 22:13). Access to the Holy City, then, requires proper attire.

Specifically, it requires wearing washed robes, **"Without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless"** (Ephesians 5:27). How can we acquire such pure wedding clothes? Can we rub out the stains of our sins by performing some kind of good work, praying to the saints, or beating and depriving our bodies? No! There's only one way for our, **"Filthy rags"** (Isaiah 64:6) to be washed white enough for Heaven. That's by washing them in the perfect works and precious, **"Blood of the Lamb"** (Revelation 7:14). Believing that the blood Jesus spilled on the cross has paid the full price for all our sins is what makes us acceptable in God's sight, giving a comforting promise to believers!

Application:

Were you ever at a wedding reception where you had to wait and wait for the bride and groom to arrive? Either the pictures took an extra long time, or they decided to drive to a special location to get some really pretty shots, or they just wanted to get their money's worth from the rented limo. Meanwhile your stomach is starting to growl because the three celery sticks and two baby carrots you ate during the cocktail hour can only sustain a person for so long. Finally, the bride and groom arrive and the dinner and reception begin. Isn't it amazing how somewhere along the way, engaged in pleasant conversation, dance, and warm congratulations, you forget all about the delay earlier? You're just thrilled to have been invited and happy to be part of the celebration.

In a similar way, the Apostle John invites us to the wedding banquet of the Lamb. He says, **"Come! Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life"** (v. 17).

We gain access to this glorious wedding banquet by trusting in Jesus Alone for our salvation. But there's still room in the wedding banquet for more people. That's why we conclude this Revelation Series on the great privilege that Jesus has entrusted to us. Until He comes again in glory, we have one main task: To go out and invite others to this great wedding feast. Carrying out this task will result in some unpleasant treatment. Most people won't respond well. Some may even persecute us in some way, making our lives here quite miserable. But even if we should die for our faith, look where we'll be! We'll be in the Holy City, singing our Alleluias with all the martyred believers of the past. Together we'll ask, **"How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until You judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood" (Revelation 6:10)?** Not until the trumpets sound will we forget about Jesus' delay in coming. Once that Day arrives, however, we'll be thrilled to have been invited and happy to be a part of the celebration. What a comforting promise for believers!

Conclusion:

Think back to those dreadful words from my childhood, "Just you wait until your father comes home!" Was there ever a time when those words produced a feeling other than fear in my heart? Yes there was! Celebrating my birthday together as a family was always very important to my parents. Unfortunately that meant having to wait before opening my presents and going out to my favorite restaurant. My mother would say, "You'll just have to wait until your father comes home!" Same words, but they suddenly took on a whole new meaning! Now I really couldn't wait for my father to return home. I greatly anticipated his arrival.

Isn't that the feeling the Holy Spirit has planted in our hearts today? Jesus is coming soon! We have His Word on it. We don't know exactly when He will return, but we do know that He's coming with the biggest and best present of all. He's coming to welcome us into, **"The gates of the Holy City...that we may take the free gift of the water of life" (vv. 14, 17)**. With such a glorious vision (or Revelation) before our eyes, we can join the Apostle John and all the persecuted believers of his day in saying, **"Amen! Come, Lord Jesus" (v. 20)!** Without a doubt, Jesus' return is (1) a needed warning for unbelievers and (2) a comforting promise for believers. Either way, *The Resurrected Lord Is Coming Soon!* Now that is something to celebrate! That gives us something to sing about! ***We Sing Our Alleluias to the Resurrected Lord!*** Amen!