

Grace: God's undeserved love for each and every one of us. Mercy: God forgiving us our sins for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ. And Peace: peace of heart, peace of mind, peace with God. All of these are yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Revelation of Jesus Christ as recorded by Saint John reading from the twenty-second chapter beginning at the sixth verse:

***Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. <sup>7</sup> "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." <sup>8</sup> Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the***

***prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." <sup>10</sup> And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. <sup>11</sup> "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." <sup>12</sup> "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. <sup>13</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."***

Heavenly Father these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Today is the last Sunday of the church year. It is more commonly known as "Christ the King Sunday." This is the weekend of the church year in which we take time to think on Jesus Christ as our glorious king... our king who is coming back to bring us to Him.

This life can be tough, can it not? The days seem to only get longer now that winter is slowly setting in. The cold, the dark, the dankness... Winter days just seem so long. Coming to a meeting when it is dark and leaving the meeting and it is still darker. Waking up when it is dark out and going to sleep in that same darkness, while spending all day in a building that is lit by lights and not the sun. This is such a LONG time of the year and we are also just coming up on the end of the longest part of the church year. For the last 27 weeks we have been in the Trinity season. For the last half of the year we have been celebrating the Trinity season and now the non-festival half of the church year is about to end. The year is going to end, the church year is going to end, and soon, the world is going to end. This life, is just getting LONG!

However, it is on this Sunday that we set our ultimate focus on one thing and those words are expressed beautifully in the words of Christ in our text today... ***Behold, I am coming quickly!*** You knew that Jesus Christ was talking in our text, right? For those who have a certain kind of

Bible, we see the red letters and we know that Jesus is talking. However for those who do not have the red-letter edition of the Bible we know this is Jesus talking for He tells us, "Behold, I am coming soon!" Who else would give John this message and also who else would those readers of John be waiting for? An angel? A dead relative? A prophet from long ago? Of course not, we, as readers of God's Word, are waiting for Jesus Christ to come.

But does it not seem like it is taking forever? I've been alive a mere thirty-two (32) years and I, at times, get tired of waiting. I want Jesus to come back and I've only had to wait about half or a third of the time that others have been waiting for. John, too, traditionally lived to be 99 years old... and He was waiting nearly 70 years for Jesus to return, and we are now nearly 2000 years removed from the death of Jesus and the death of John. And we are still waiting.

And as we wait, John gives us a warning, "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still." Those who are sinning, let them keep on sinning? That seems

like an awkward message does it not? We should let people keep on sinning? Well let's think about that, are we going to stop the people from sinning? Are we going to be able to stop people from being unjust? Are we going to stop people from being filthy? Are we going to stop people from sinning... No we are not. And we are not going to stop sinning either.

We are going to continue in our sin until one thing happens: until we are called home to Christ. We are going to continue in our sinful ways: lying, stealing, committing adultery, coveting. You name it and we will continue in it. We are going to continue sinning because it is in our nature. Our sinful nature wants us to continue in its sinful ways... and we happily oblige. And when we continue in our sinful ways, we are admitting one thing, as Christ said, "Those who sin are slaves to sin." When we sin we admit that our master, our ruler, is satan the king of sin.

So often, sadly, we should admit that most Sundays could be called "satan the king" Sunday and we would have to agree with it.

Here's a simple test to see if we could use this name: Have you ever sinned? Did you sin this morning? Have you sinned since you've been at church? All of those demand a "yes" answer and we cannot deny that. So often, we live lives that are in obedience... to satan. We obey that sinful nature and we like it. This is our condition. As Paul says, "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey..."

But then we need to heed the words of John just before this statement. While we are to continue letting sinners be sinners, we need to do one thing that is all the more important: "For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." <sup>10</sup> And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand." The angel is telling John that he is a fellow servant, just like John, and we all have one thing that we need to do: Worship God! And thanks be to our Savior, our true King, we can worship our God.

We worship God when we do not seal up the words of this book of prophecy and what does this book of prophecy tell us? “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” “For the wages of sin is death.” “I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” “but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.” “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” This is just a sampling of the prophecy that God has revealed to us.

In God’s Word we learn that Jesus came as a baby to live on this earth. He came to live a perfect life. He suffered. He died on the cross for all of our sin. He rose the third day to proclaim His victory and to call His children to Him. This is what Jesus Christ has done for us. And when He proclaimed His victory, it was *the* victory over sin, death, and satan. Jesus rules over satan... Jesus is our king! This is the message of the Bible, of the prophecy of this book. God has done everything for us for our salvation and for our freedom.

Jesus is our king when we obey Him. As we have heard and read ourselves, when we follow sin we are slaves to sin; but when we follow Christ, through faith, we are slaves to Christ. We are slaves to righteousness, mercy, grace, love, and freedom. When we follow Christ, then the words of our text apply to us, “he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.” Because of Christ we are righteous, because of Jesus we are holy. Because of Jesus, we have a kingdom waiting for us. Because of our king, we have heaven

waiting and He is coming soon to take us all there. Maybe not “soon” in our own personal understanding... but Jesus Himself tells us that He is “coming quickly!”

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ, we have had quite a year. It has had its ups and downs. Between meeting new friends and moving to new places, God continues to bless us all with all that He has done and continues to do. As the Last Sunday of the church year comes to a close, we are thankful to God for everything that we have and everything that He has done for us.

What better way to close out this church year than with the words of Christ, “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. <sup>13</sup> “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

Thanks be to God, who is our King. Thanks be to Christ, who is our returning King. Thanks be to God who sent His Son, that though He died for our sins... He is our living and reigning king!