

⁶The angel said to me, “These words are faithful and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.”

⁷“And look: I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who holds on to the words of the prophecy of this book.”

⁸I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I heard and saw them, I bowed down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. ⁹But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and also with those who hold on to the words of this book. Worship God!”

¹⁰The angel also said to me:

Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.

¹¹Let the one who is unjust continue to be unjust.

Let the one who is filthy continue to be filthy.

Let the one who is just continue to do what is just.

Let the one who is holy continue to be holy.

¹²Look, I am coming soon and my reward is with me, to repay each one according to what he has done. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

How easy is waiting? Whether it's the result of some medical test or an upcoming meeting you know will be hard, waiting can be nerve wracking. It creates all kinds of questions. What's going to happen? And when? What will be the end result? But I think the biggest question is this one: Am I ready?

In this season at the end of the church year, we spend time talking about and meditating on Christ's return. But the natural question that comes to our minds is that same question that comes with waiting for anything: Am I ready? Revelation 22 answers that question. At the very end of the Bible, God gives us reassurance, not riddles to solve or conspiracies to chase. He ends his word with clarity and promise. And so, our sermon text this morning is really Jesus' last words to his Church. Of course, our Savior is not leaving us with fear. He is leaving us with comfort and strength.

Why can we live with confidence as we look toward the end? Because God's word is not unclear. It does not hedge its promises or speak in a way that leaves your eternal well-being up to a coin flip. It is rock-solid and true.

What is the point of Revelation? Many obsess over it, turning it into a codebook for predicting the end. Books and teachers speak of rapture timelines and tie modern events to supposed prophecies, creating fear and uncertainty. They treat Revelation like a chronological puzzle instead of a message of comfort centered on Christ's victory. When the book is read as a

literal, future-only script, it becomes frightening and confusing. But Revelation must be read with the rest of Scripture, which shows it as God's promise of grace past, present, and future.

God gave John a revelation, an insight into the glory of heaven and Christ's triumphal reign. The Christian Church at that time needed assurance. Bloody persecution had swept over God's people, and the threat of prison and death brought the question of whether following Jesus was worth it to the forefront. John and the ancient Church needed assurance, and so do we. So, Revelation plays out in a series of pictures and symbols, all pointed to the certainty found in Christ. Here in this section, and multiple times in the book, both Jesus and God's word are stamped "faithful and true" by God. This is a guarantee. God is making sure we know that the promises he makes to us here are not speculation or human prediction. The same God who spoke through his Old Testament prophets now speaks to John and through John to us.

In a world where we can't always put our finger on what is true, where we often let subjective feelings qualify as truth, and where all kinds of prophecies and predictions about the future flutter around, Christians need an anchor. God gives us that anchor. He gives us his word. What he tells us about Jesus' victory is not a guess. What he tells us about our place in his kingdom is not a possibility. God's word is a promise, an ironclad will and testament for our benefit.

But do we trust God's promises? Do we trust that he has our best interest in mind when our life burns down, literally or figuratively? Do we actually believe that our sins can be forgiven when we really screwed up this time and a prison sentence looms large in the future? Do we actually know that heaven is our home, or are we left with doubts? Maybe you don't like these few Sundays at the end of the church year. Maybe you feel uncomfortable discussing Judgement Day and Jesus' coming again? Why is that? Is it, as I said before, because you are afraid you are not ready? Is it because you don't fully trust God's promises, expecting the last day to be a day of fear instead of excitement and fulfillment? You are not alone in feeling this fear, but you are still wrong for not trusting that God means what he says.

What does God say to doubting sinners? Does he say, "Be gone from my sight. I only want those with the strongest faith"? No! This book of Revelation was for Christians struggling with doubts and fears. The words and promises contained in it are not just for the first century Church. They are for you as well. Do not be afraid. God gives you his promises in his word, which just like him, is faithful and true. Listen to the angel. Don't seal up this book. Don't stray from God's word because it brings you unease. Hold onto it. Keep it. Preserve it. Read it, again and again. Because in this word God dispels your fears of inadequacy with his Son who died in your place. In it, God promises that all who put their trust in him and not in their failing flesh will stand in victory and in joy on that final day. Christ has conquered sin and death, and

because of that, your future is certain. This is what the one who is faithful and true says to you in his word that is also faithful and true.

If this word is certain, then every promise God declares in this word is certain. This word carries weight, especially when he says, “I am coming soon!” Soon means sudden, not scheduled out into the future. Soon does not give a countdown. It tells us to stand ready at all times. Soon demands urgency. And notice that Jesus doesn’t just say it once. Twice in these few verses he tells us he’s coming soon.

But does his Church always stand in the watchtowers and wait? Or do we fall asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane like the disciples? Do we wander aimlessly because while Jesus says “soon,” we don’t actually believe he’s coming soon. Two thousand years of waiting would support our indifference and apathy. So, why does Jesus say “soon” when he really means more than two millennia? It’s because we don’t know the day or hour of his return. The end will come suddenly, like a thief in the night. Jesus tells us this, not to stoke fear in us, but to encourage us to urgency: “Blessed is the one who keeps the words of this prophecy.” This urgent call is not to shape up our lives. It’s to hold to the words of the gospel, to cling to Jesus as Judgement comes a day nearer with each evening and morning.

Urgency is not anxiety. Urgency is purposeful living. It’s humble repentance. It’s a heart that looks outside itself for salvation, to the word, instead of inside itself, for a false sense of self-acceptance. Jesus and his angels shake John awake here: “I am coming soon.” “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and also with those who hold on to the words of this book. Worship God!” Jesus shakes us awake today too. No more aimless wandering through life. No more “I’ll get right with God another day” mindset. He is coming soon, and he loves you enough to wake you up and make you ready.

Of course, the one who comes at the end is the one who redeemed us from sin with his holy blood. Our Judge is also our Savior. So, his return is not a threat to believers, but the completion of his promises, when faith will be turned to sight. Yes, he is coming soon, to rescue his people, to bring us home, to collect on what he won at the cross.

If he is coming soon, and if his word is certain, then his nearness to us even now is going to shape the way we live every day. The angel speaks God’s word here: “Let the one who is unjust continue to be unjust. Let the one who is filthy continue to be filthy. Let the one who is just continue to do what is just. Let the one who is holy continue to be holy.” He is not saying that it is good for the unjust to continue in their injustice or for the filthy to remain filthy. Rather, those without faith are going to live without faith and those with faith are going to live lives of faith. This is why Jesus at the end says, “Look, I am coming soon and my reward is with me, to repay each one according to what he has done.” He’s not advocating salvation by works. Revelation itself repeatedly says that we are justified by the blood of the lamb. He’s simply

pointing to what James wrote: “For just as the body without breath is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” At the end of time, your faith will be shown by your works. Did you live motivated by the gospel, or did you live for personal and worldly gain?

It is certainly easy to get caught up in the rat race of living for accomplishments or to make faith into a contest. And that is often how Christians talk about faith. They talk about having to prove themselves to God or make sure that they are “Christian enough.” Don’t be confused, friends. Jesus is not encouraging you to work-righteousness. Quite the opposite. He has given you the gift of salvation and faith and new life. Now he’s simply telling you not to take those things for granted, to live in thanksgiving in everything that you do.

This whole section is about readiness. Jesus tells you to stand in wait, steady like a Buckingham Palace guard. It sounds intimidating. It sounds like you have to work and work for God but never know where you stand with him. But watchful waiting for Jesus’ return is not that complicated. It involves treasuring his word of promise, and spending time in it, being reminded of your God’s love for you. It involves keeping Jesus and Jesus alone as the focus of your heart. And what comes out of those things? Well, as you wait in eager anticipation of Jesus’ return, deeply grateful for what he has done for you, your life is going to better resemble God’s perfect design than it did before.

He is coming soon. His word is certain about that. And our hearts eagerly expect it. Amen.