

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E.
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**Midweek Lenten Vesper #6.
From Garden to Glory to The
Garden of Paradise**

**April 9, 2014 Revelation 22:1-6
HCSB**



The Source of Life

22.1 Then he showed me the river of living water, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the broad street of the city. The tree of life was on both sides of the river, bearing 12 kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations, ³ and there will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His slaves will serve Him. ⁴ They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ Night will no longer exist, and people will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever.

The Time Is Near

⁶ Then he said to me, “These words are faithful and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His slaves what must quickly take place.”

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

It’s kind of confusing. It’s called the happiest place on earth! Now is that Disneyland or Disney World? I was pretty little when we went to Disneyland out in California. My Uncle Dean and Aunt Elaine live in Torrance, CA – not too far from Disneyland. Many years later the LWMS met down in Florida and we went to Disneyworld! In many ways they are

very similar – these happiest places on earth! The happiest place on earth has rides – wonderful rides that people stand in line for – sometimes hours in line for wonderful rides. The happiest place in the world – where the rides have famous names! Pirates of the Caribbean, Space Mountain, Splash Mountain. It's a Small World, Finding Nemo Submarine, Alice in Wonderland, Matterhorn and the Mad Tea Party. It's a Small World in the happiest place on earth. What could go wrong? It got stuck! The ride broke down – for ½ an hour – for 30 minutes the ride broke down. A man named Jose – in his early 50's was on the ride. Jose is handicapped – usually in a wheelchair – Jose couldn't climb out of the ride – and they couldn't lift him out – so there he sat. And Jose said – the worst part was the music – that song – “It's a small world, after all...” over and over and over again – it blasted into his ears – into his brain – into his memory. He couldn't get it out---“It's a small world, it's a small world, it's a small world.” You guessed it – he sued and you guessed it – he won. How much? \$8,000 for 30 minutes that were not the happiest on earth! There is no Heaven on earth. This last Wednesday Midweek Lenten Vesper we have come full circle – from the Garden of Eden to:

One Day We Will Be In The Garden Of Paradise!

I. Everything will be wonderful

II. We will be with Jesus!

We talked about the Revelation to St. John in Adult Bible Class last week. The Apostle John – the disciple that Jesus loved was living in exile on the Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea – just a little south of places like Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. These are 7 churches – congregations – sheep and lambs that Jesus died to save. To understand the Revelation to St. John – we need to remember it's not linear – that is it's not chapter one happens – then chapter two – then chapter three – and after all of that – chapter twenty-one and finally twenty-two! Dr. Becker – who used to teach at our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon used to say Revelation is kind of like a kaleidoscope. Did you have one of those when you were little? You look through one end and see a beautiful design in little pieces of stained glass. You turn the far

end – and the little chips turn and sparkle. You see the same chips again and again – in different combinations from a different angle – but the ultimate truths stay the same! There is a terrible spiritual battle going on all around us all the time. On one side is the dragon – Satan and his army of demons and godless wicked people. On the other side is the Risen Christ – His army of angels and His faithful people. As Judgment Day draws ever closer – the battle will become increasingly terrible! But the ultimate outcome is never ever in doubt! Jesus has won a crushing victory for us. Jesus' victory over death and the grave is never ever in doubt! John wrote the words that the Holy Spirit breathed into him – words of law – as he admonished the seven congregations and us – about our sin – our attitude and our sins – our painful hurtful mistakes. John wrote gospel truth – comfort and encouragement that we are saved by grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone.

Be assured – as you come to Church and Bible Class and hear and study and discuss God's Word that you can understand the great majority of the Revelation to St. John. Much of it is very simple – very clear – very much to the point. We read from Revelation at funerals – Chapter 21 – the one before the verses we are concentrating on today. **21 v.1 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."⁶ He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. ⁸But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."**

Often times – when God’s Word talks about Heaven – it talks about the things that won’t be there. **No more death or mourning or crying or pain.** Heaven is so beyond our experience – sometimes it’s easiest to talk about all the painful parts of this world that will be missing in Heaven. In Bible Class on Tuesday mornings at Heritage Homes – we are reading through the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah. There is wonderful comfort in Isaiah chapter 65! ¹⁷ **“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. ¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. ²⁰ “Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. ²¹ They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³ They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. ²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,”** says the LORD.

Here we have the positive aspects of Heaven. God’s Word says, **22.1 Then he showed me the river of living water, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the broad street of the city. The tree of life was on both sides of the river, bearing 12 kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations, ³ and there will no longer be any curse.** The river of living water – sparkling like crystal – wondrous, pure and fresh and clean. If you have ever gone camping – like in the boundary waters – the waters north of Duluth – into literal wilderness – where not only are engines against the law – wheels are against the law. You canoe and portage – back pack – carry your food and your 9 mil. Glock bear

repellent! Water! I had not been that thirsty since 3rd grade recess – where we would stand in line by the bubbler – and Mrs. Neumeister would count to *five Mississippi* – and then she’d shout, “Next!” – and you were finished! Your throat burns – and the ice cold water brings a soothing relief that words cannot explain. Aaaaaaaaah! Sometimes Mrs. Neumeister would yell, “Next!” And it was as if you didn’t hear here. Back then teachers were not afraid to touch you. She would push you out of the way and yell, “Next!” – again! You can’t drink the boundary waters – without risking getting sick. You need to boil the water – or put one of those little iodine pills and wait for it to melt! When we are in Heaven – the water will be pure and clean and sweet. We can’t imagine how refreshing. **The tree of life was on both sides of the river, bearing 12 kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month.** 12 kinds of fruit! It’s like the fruit of the month club. I used to think it was a joke – the “*Fruit of the Month Club*” on the pilot episode of *Everybody Loves Raymond* – I can’t stay here – there’s too much fruit. But there is more than one Fruit of the Month Club. You can join for 3 months or 6 months or 12 months. You get 5 pounds of fruit every month for about \$32 per month – a little less than \$400 for hand picked very sweet and juicy fruit. What is heaven like? It’s like a miraculous tree – that has 12 different kinds of fruit – like a fruit of the month – all year long. Now that would be a wonderful tree – apples one month then oranges then peaches then plums then something else! Again – it’s more glorious than anything you have ever seen – more wonderful than anything you can imagine. Again – no one will ever say, “Sure, it’s wonderful. It’s just that I thought that – I don’t know – it would somehow be a little better!” No one will ever say that!

⁵ Night will no longer exist, and people will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever. I heard the other day that there are 26 letter – that can be put in all different combinations to make English words. It was estimated there are about 400,000 words in the English language. Before I went away to college I got a copy of The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language! It has 10 entries for the letter a – then 2 entries for A.A. Aachen is a city in Germany and Aalborg is a city in Denmark – population 86,000 in 1970. There is the ever popular aardvark followed closely by the aardwolf. 1,490 pages later we are all the way to **zymurgy**. Do you know

what that means? Zymurgy? There might be some here who know. It has to do with fermentation – when you are brewing beer! Finally there’s **zyzzyva** – 3 z’s, 2 y’s and 1 a. Zyzzyva is a type of tropical American Weevil – harmful to plants! All these words – all 400,000 words in the English language are not sufficient to explain Heaven. You have to see it – experience it – and even then – there is no promise we will understand it. It is Paradise – to be with Jesus for ever and ever – because Jesus took all our sins away. It is not a dream – a pious wish or hope but a fact. *I’m but a stranger here. Heaven is my home* – because we are saved by grace through the death and resurrection of our Redeemer – the living Christ! *Amazing Grace!* Amen!

To God alone all glory!