

Revelation 22:12-20

Today in the Church Year is known as “waiting Sunday.” Jesus tells His disciples to wait; wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit. Don’t do anything. Just pray; pray and wait. Stay in the city, sit there, pray, and wait. Sounds like the command you would give your dog. Sit. Stay. Wait. (Maybe not pray.) And the disciples are obedient dogs. They do stay. They do wait. But I’m sure it wasn’t easy. After Easter, Simon Peter grew restless waiting for Jesus, and so he went fishing. Six others went with him. Now they are told to wait for the Holy Spirit. But how long must they wait? “*Not many days from now,*” is all they’re told. It took ten days. They only had to wait ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven until Pentecost. That’s not bad; not too awfully long to wait.

But then there’s us. Here we are between Ascension Day, which was Thursday, and Pentecost in the Church Year. It’s “waiting Sunday.” But even after Pentecost arrives next Sunday our waiting will go on, and on, and on. Every Sunday, for us, is a “waiting Sunday.” Our entire life is, more or less, a time of waiting. We’re waiting, not for the Holy Spirit. He came on Pentecost. It’s Jesus we’re waiting for.

You heard His words from Revelation this morning: “*Behold, I am coming soon.*” How soon? Not many days from now? Well He spoke these words nearly 2,000 years ago...”*Surely I am coming soon.*” He repeats them for emphasis. But 2,000 years...and counting? How do You define soon, Jesus? (we’re tempted to ask)

But then you remember...I remember sitting, waiting, praying, staying by your loved one’s bed as he or she was in the dying process. We were waiting for Jesus to come. And during this sacred time His words were of great comfort: “*Surely I am coming soon.*” It was a promise we could cling to. And then the waiting was over. Sometimes too soon. As we commended your loved one to Jesus, He came as He had promised, and He took your loved one to heaven.

And so we can wait, can’t we? But as we wait, are we, like dogs, to stay, sit, and just wait for Jesus to come? Well earlier in our same chapter in Revelation Jesus says, “*Behold, I am coming soon, bringing My recompense with Me, to repay everyone for what he has done.*” Oh! So we’d better do something. Otherwise we’ll receive the same reward as that worthless servant who did nothing, but buried his one talent in the ground. On the other hand we’d better be careful not to do whatever our flesh desires to do. In the next verse we are warned about practicing sinful things.

So what do we do? We come. Yep. As we wait for Jesus to come, we come. “*Come,*” we’re told, “*let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.*” What is this water of life? It’s Jesus. He is the living water. He is the water that gives life. And this is why you come here every “waiting Sunday” as you wait for Jesus to come.

There is something about this which few grasp. And if you do grasp it, you are blessed, for such understanding is a gift of God. It has to do with Jesus ascending into heaven. Because Jesus ascended, and being at the Father’s right hand means that He is everywhere, we have His promise that where the water of life is freely given, Jesus is there for us. Where His Gospel is

purely preached...where His Sacraments are freely offered and given, there is life and salvation. There in these holy things Jesus is with us always.

And so when you come here, it's not just to be informed. It's to drink the water of life. When the pastor absolves you, it's Jesus forgiving you. When the pastor preaches, it's Christ in the pulpit. (The pastor is not Christ, but Christ is the pastor.) When your little one is baptized, it's Jesus receiving your child into His kingdom. When the bread and wine is given to you at this altar, it's Jesus feeding you with His own body and blood. Jesus ascended so that He is the one coming...how soon? "As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup." As often as we take the water of life without price.

Most people have no problem with Jesus in the past. And Christians look for Him to come in the future. But His ascension into heaven puts Him here with us in the present. And this is vital. For if we only believe in a Jesus who lived, suffered, died, and rose again, and who will come in the future on the Last Day, then our faith is on shaky ground. Because we live in the present. And if Jesus is only up in heaven, and not here with us and for us, then we ourselves are the ones who have to come to Jesus; who have to take charge of our own faith.

But we fail...daily. We need a present Jesus, not an absent Jesus. We need to drink, not a memory of what Jesus did, but the real water of life right here and now.

This water of life for you is without cost, but it cost Jesus everything. He purchased it with His own blood. God had to die on the cross for you to drink the living water.

And this water is here for you. But are you thirsty? "*Let the one who is thirsty come,*" says our text, "*let the one who desires take the water of life.*" I want you to take a hymnal and turn with me to page 330. These are the Christian Questions and Answers from the Small Catechism which Dr. Luther prepared for those who intend to go to the Sacrament. Look with me at the last question and answer, number 20. *But what should you do if you are not aware of this need and have no hunger and thirst for the Sacrament? To such a person no better advice can be given than this: first, he should touch his body to see if he still has flesh and blood. Then he should believe what the Scriptures say of it in Galatians 5 and Romans 7. Second, he should look around to see whether he is still in the world, and remember that there will be no lack of sin and trouble, as the Scriptures say in John 15-16 and in 1 John 2 and 5. Third, he will certainly have the devil also around him, who with his lying and murdering day and night will let him have no peace, within or without, as the Scriptures picture him...*

If someone is not thirsty for the water of life, I cannot make him thirsty. If someone does not have a desire for Jesus, I cannot give him this desire. But God can. And even more, He can quench your thirst. He can fill your desire. And He does. In your ears right now He is pouring forth the water of life. At His holy table He will give you Jesus whom you desire.

He does this out of mercy. You are the object of His mercy. You He forgives. Your sins, all of them are forgiven. This is what Jesus does for you. This is why He comes to you now. To forgive you. So you can wait for Him to come in the end. But you can wait with confidence and joy, and hope. "*Surely I am coming soon.*" And we reply, "*Come Lord Jesus. Amen!*"