

The Final Testimony of Our Risen Savior Revelation 22:1-7, 16-17 (5/7/17)

Thank you, FBC youth and children, for your leadership in worship over the past two Sundays. When Amy asked about doing these services back-to-back, I was a bit... hesitant. But then I remembered who would be getting our young people ready to do this, and all my concerns went away.

I knew Amy would have everyone prepared to lead us in a meaningful worship experience—and she did! And I know that the families of these youth and children were involved as well, so thanks to all—kids, parents and Amy!

This morning, we turn to the very last chapter in the last book of the Bible—the 22nd chapter of Revelation. I'm calling this sermon, **The Final Testimony of Our Risen Savior**. Although our Easter celebration took place three Sundays back, we're still in that season of the church year known as Eastertide.

In fact, this season extends for a full fifty days and a total of eight Sundays. Beginning next Sunday, though, our church will turn its attention to our families as we celebrate Mother's Day on May 14 and then, on the very next Sunday, we recognize our graduates.

But I don't want us to just leave Easter in the past. Our need to be reminded of these great truths and to be strengthened in our faith in the Risen Lord continues. I say this because the world is still out there, and people continue to struggle with all kinds of problems.

For some, it's financial issues. Others are dealing with fractured families. We all know people who are battling health problems. And there's always plenty of loneliness... and lostness.

Bottom line, there's still so much that's wrong in our world. All the challenging, discouraging things that were here before Easter... are still here. Life isn't as wonderful as we would like for it to be, or as it *should be* in a world where our Lord's victory over death and the grave has already happened.

Have you heard the story about the fellow who always wore a painful pair of shoes? Every day, he complained about them, saying, "These shoes really hurt my feet. They're awful."

His co-workers got tired of hearing it, so one of them suggested that he buy a new pair of shoes.

The man replied, "I've thought about doing that--believe me--but I've decided not to. You see, I hate this job. No offense, but every day I come to work, punch in, and experience eight hours of drudgery. I hate every minute of it."

"Then I go home, and my wife is never satisfied. She nags me day and night. All the time, nag, nag, nag..."

"Then, not long ago, my daughter and her husband moved in with us, and they have two of the most obnoxious kids I've ever seen. They run wild--destroy the furniture, tear up the house."

"On top of that, my mother-in-law is living with us, too. And every night she grabs the remote control, sits down in my favorite chair, and I'm stuck watching the TV programs she chooses."

Finally, he gets to the point: "Here's the thing," he said, "with all these problems, the only real pleasure I have in my life... is... taking off these shoes."

Have you ever felt that way? Maybe life isn't as wonderful as you once thought it would be.

There's a birthday card that shows a guy in his underwear sliding down a banister. It reads, "As you slide down the banister of life, may all the splinters go your way."

The truth is, though, the splinters don't always go our way; and they can turn out to be a real pain in the patoot! So... what do we talk about today as we face all the challenges of real life?

Well, let's turn to this last chapter of the Bible, the **22nd chapter of Revelation**. **We'll look at verses 1-7 and 16-17**. We believe our Lord spoke these words to the Apostle John several decades after His resurrection and ascension to the Father.

John was exiled on the island of Patmos, put there by the Roman authorities during a time of persecution. The Risen Christ gives John a message for the church: a message of reassurance, a promise that Christ and His Church will ultimately experience victory over all those who persecute them.

As The Revelation draws to a close, John writes: **"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.**

⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. ⁶ The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

In verse seven, John quotes Jesus: **⁷ "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll."**

Then in verses 16 and 17, he quotes Jesus again: **"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. (vv. 16-17)**

Think about this: if someone was asked to describe you in just one word, what would they say? So often, we think we can do this. For example, we say, "That's a happy person...or a sad person. He's studious, or angry, or nosy, or smart, or lazy."

Or we think of great persons from the past and describe them, using just one word. Napoleon was a warrior. Columbus was an explorer; Martin Luther--reformer; Thomas Edison-- inventor.

Now, some descriptions are more appealing than others. Not everybody likes reformers, for example, or even that person who always seems to be happy. Some will like that, but others won't.

Anyway, when it comes to Jesus, there is such a mixture of words

used to describe Him—and they cover a wide spectrum. He is strong, and yet He's gentle. He's the Good Shepherd, but He's also the Lamb of God. He's the High Priest, but He's also The Sacrifice. He's King of Kings, but He's also Servant of All.

Now get this: in our text for this morning, Jesus is called what?... a "Root;" but He's also called the bright "Morning Star."

Can you think of two things any further apart than these? Can you think of two objects any more different than a root in the ground and a star in the heavens? What are we to make of this?

I. Well, I have a few suggestions that may help us make sense of this. First, **JESUS IS BOTH HERE and THERE!**

A. Follow this: a root is **HERE**—close by in the ground. It stays put except when a storm, or flood, or perhaps some kind of excavation uproots it. Roots sink themselves deep into the soil. They are part of the good earth over which we walk, and play, and cut grass.

Jesus, in other words, is very much a part of this world. He left the glories of heaven to come here among us as a baby, the child of Mary. She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. He lived among us, and died for us; and today many of us claim Him as our risen Savior and Lord. He is with us now as we worship—He is **HERE**.

B. Yet He's also **THERE**—UP there—like the stars. Wherever you go you can see stars. You see more of them out in the country away from the lights of the city; but wherever we go, on a clear night, stars are part of the sky. They're part of God's universe.

Jesus is also universal. Wherever you go in this world, you'll find Him being worshiped. His Church is growing in the remotest parts of Africa. You'll find Him in India, and in the Ukraine where Christians can once again openly proclaim their faith in Christ.

Doors have opened in places like China, and the church has grown dramatically even in the midst of persecution. Anywhere you go in this world, the message of Jesus has likely gone before, often in spite of opposition and persecution. Jesus Christ is **THERE**.

And wherever He goes, He's at work bridging the differences between people. Red and yellow, black and white--they are **ALL**

precious in His sight. Jesus loves the little children, and yes-- even the adults, of the world—although that's often harder!

If there is any hope for us to ever overcome bigotry and hatred and our tendency to fight one another, it must be in the person of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. He's the One who can bring diverse peoples together and make them brothers and sisters in Him.

In Christ, there is no difference--no black or white, yellow or brown! No rich or poor! No male or female! We're all the same in the eyes of Jesus—one in Christ. He is HERE; and He is THERE!

II. Something else: **JESUS IS SEEN and HE IS UNSEEN.** We can continue learning about Jesus our entire lives. Harry Emerson Fosdick compared our understanding of Jesus with our understanding of the sea. He said:

"I know the sea, but I don't know the vastness of the sea. There is a part of the sea that washes up on the sands of my life. I can bathe in it. It lulls me to sleep with its waves. And yet, I know only a very little part of the sea."

It's the same way with Jesus, isn't it? He is so close we feel we can almost reach out and touch Him. And yet, He is so magnificent that we will never completely understand Him.

A. Roots are hidden--**UNSEEN.** They do their work down in the soil where we can't see them. We know that during a drought roots will reach deeper and deeper into the ground looking for moisture and nourishment.

We may be sleeping, but the roots of the grasses and trees and flowers of the world keep on doing their thing. We don't see them, though. They're hidden from us.

Jesus is like this. There's a part of Him that's mystery. We'll never be able to understand all there is to know about Jesus.

Don't ask me to explain to you how Jesus walked on water or how He fed the multitudes. Don't ask me to explain how He healed the lepers and the lame.

I can't fully fathom how God can conquer sin and death by allowing Jesus to be nailed to a cross, burying Him in a tomb, and then raising Him from the dead. I don't understand the grace and

mercy and forgiveness of God. That's beyond my comprehension, it's deeper than what I can see and understand.

B. But... there's also a part of Jesus that's **SEEN**. When He came into our world, John says we saw Him with our eyes and touched Him with our hands. Some reclined at the table with Him, and listened to Him, and soaked in His teachings. And this changed them, and us, forever. We SAW His glory, and more.

When Jesus came into our world, He revealed not only Himself, but the very nature and personality of God. So there's a part of God that we see only because of Jesus. And God wants others to be able to see Jesus... in us.

When we become Christians--when we confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, when we repent of our sins and are buried with Him in Christian baptism--the Bible says that our sins are forgiven, we are raised to walk in newness of life, and we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

God puts His Spirit deep inside of us. Much like that root deep in the ground, no one can see the Holy Spirit in us as we feed on God's Word, and pray, and fellowship with one another. But as His influence grows in our lives, His presence becomes obvious—the Spirit's Presence is SEEN... through us.

There's something about a person who's being transformed by the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit affects the way we talk with others, how we deal with the challenging situations in our lives, and even the expressions on our faces. His Presence makes a difference in us that can be SEEN.

I heard about a man who attended a funeral where the ladies of the church prepared a meal for the family and their guests—just as ours do when there's been a death. The man said that as he watched those wonderful ladies serve the meal and take care of the family, he thought, "I could have seen their faces anywhere and I would have known they were Christians."

Unfortunately, we can sometimes recognize people who have become hardcore sinners as well. We can see in their faces that they are resistant toward God—they have a rebellious spirit.

The way they live makes this obvious. You can see it. Some things are hidden inside of us, while other things are clearly SEEN. Christ in us is both SEEN and UNSEEN.

III. One more observation: **JESUS IS OF TIME and ETERNITY.** Roots are temporary. They grow for a time. They go through their cycle of life, and then die.

A. Part of Jesus was temporary (**OF TIME**). He came to us in human form—with a physical body like ours--and we rejected Him and crucified Him. We took that temporary human body, put it in a tomb, and said, "It's over. It's done."

Roots are temporary, but the stars are eternal—at least, from our perspective, they are. Sometime when you look up into the night-time sky, stop for a moment and realize that the stars twinkling in the heavens above you are the same stars as those that dotted the skies when God first breathed life into man.

They are the same stars that were overhead as Noah built his ark, and when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with God's commandments. They're the stars that hid their faces when Jesus was crucified, and sang together when He rose from the dead. As far as we can measure time, they've always been there.

Now, there's a part of us--our body—that's very attached to this world. Our physical bodies are temporary and will only last for a brief TIME. The Bible is clear that they will return to the elements from which they came—"ashes to ashes... dust to dust."

B. But the real you and me--our spirits--are **ETERNAL.** Everything that Jesus came to this earth to do was so that you and I could live our lives to the fullest during our brief moment in TIME here, and then spend ETERNITY with our Lord in heaven.

He loves each of us more than we know. He has sacrificed for us far more than we can understand. And He has made it abundantly clear that He wants to be our Savior and Lord.

While there's still TIME, friend, will you say yes to Him?