

Sermon for Easter 6 (Series C)

Text: Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23 Preached on 06-03-2007

Introduction:

I once read a very uplifting, Christian article entitled “Heaven’s Camera.” It was a story about a family who, while encouraging their dying mother, found an old camera of hers that still had film in it from years before. The film was quickly developed and the pictures were brought to their dying mother. They were pictures that had been taken on her daughter’s confirmation day. On almost every picture the dying mother found herself looking at her husband and her parents, all of whom had gone on to Heaven before her. With tears in her eyes, she looked up at her family, smiled, and said, “This is Heaven’s Camera!” She could say that because she was picturing herself soon standing in the company of those loved ones who had fallen asleep in the Lord.

Today the Apostle John does something similar for us. There is a bunch of film to be developed in our text. As we develop it, one glorious picture will come into sharp focus. Because of this picture,

Series Theme: We Sing Our Alleluias to the Resurrected Lord!

Today we sing our Alleluias because...

Theme: The Resurrected Lord Shows Us a Picture of Heaven!

Part I: We see it as a place of eternal protection

Part II: We see it as a place of eternal worship

Part I: We see it as a place of eternal protection

The first thing that caught John’s eye when looking at this picture of Heaven was what he did see. He saw a City with, “**A great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates...It had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb**” (vv. 12, 14). The people in the seven churches of Asia Minor (who received this Revelation from John) were very well acquainted with city gates. At that time cities were walled for security and protection. Massive gates added to that security, protecting them from their enemies. The big problem many of the Christians in those seven churches faced, however, did not come from outside their city walls, but from within them. They faced severe persecution from their fellow citizens. This internal persecution caused many to wonder what was going to happen to them.

Using picture language, John beautifully described the gates to the City they would one day enter. He saw that, **“There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west” (v. 13)**. These twelve gates, three on each side of the Holy City, stand as an open invitation for every believer in the world to come in and escape all the trials, all the temptations, and all the dangers we wrestle with on a daily basis! The fact that all twelve of these gates are guarded by holy angels (v. 12) reveals that Heaven really is a place of eternal protection.

Application:

There are many things we look to for protection. We may place our hope for security in being debt free and having a well diversified investment portfolio, good health insurance, and a nice term-life insurance policy. Many people feel that as long as these earthly things are in place, then their future is protected. Unfortunately, the things that make us feel safe and secure in this world can never deliver true and lasting protection. Because what happens when we suffer a stroke or heart attack and have to be placed in a care facility, a tornado or hurricane levels our home, the stock market crashes, the economy collapses, and our insurance company goes bankrupt? The truth is that nothing in the world can offer us the kind of security and protection that we all want for ourselves.

Through Faith Alone in Christ, however, we have free access to the Holy City, **“Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 2:20)**. The twelve apostles are described as the twelve foundations of Heaven (v. 14) because of the Gospel they boldly preached while still in the world. The same Gospel message is still being preached today. Through it we have come to know our Savior. In Him we have the key to the City, where, **“There will be no more death or morning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4)**. None of the things that cause so much misery and heartache in this world will be able to touch us in Heaven. Because, **“Nothing impure will ever enter the Holy City, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful” (Revelation 21:27)**, nothing will ever harm us who live in the light of God’s glory. We’re even told that there is no night in Heaven (v. 23). With no darkness, there can be no evil lurking in the shadows. No doubt about it! We see Heaven as a place of eternal protection.

Transition:

The Christians living along the western end of Asia Minor late in the

first century knew what danger was all about. No matter how dangerous things got for them, however, they knew they had a place of eternal protection waiting for them in Heaven. In addition to seeing it as a place of eternal protection, they also saw in that picture of Heaven...

Part II: We see it as a place of eternal worship

The second thing that caught John's eye when looking at this picture of Heaven was what he did not see! He said, **"A temple I did not see in the city" (v. 22)**. By placing the word for "temple" at the very beginning of this sentence, John really emphasized his surprise by the absence of any special place of worship in the Holy City. The temple had been the very heart of Old Testament worship in Jerusalem. If a person wanted contact with God, he had to go to the temple. There God was present, blessing people with His grace; speaking to them through the Scriptures; and forgiving their sins through the sacrifices made on the altar. So for John not to see a temple in Heaven was quite shocking to him.

After the initial surprise wore off, John realized that no temple or church building was necessary in Heaven. He saw that, **"The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (v. 22)**. In other words, there is something far better than a mere church structure in the Holy City. Once there, we will have a direct, personal, and intimate relationship with the LORD Himself. We will experience fellowship (or communion) with Him in it's purest form. Not only with the LORD, but with one another as well. Being together, surrounded by the light of God's love, we will enjoy the thrill of bowing down before the sole source of our salvation. Jesus Himself said, **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12)**. No doubt about it! We see Heaven as a place of eternal worship.

Application:

People are busy doing all sorts of things during this time of the year. Some are busy deciding which graduations, confirmation parties, and weddings to attend. Others are busy organizing their children's little league and soccer schedules. Still others are busy finishing the garden and other household chores. As for Amber and I, we are busy finalizing our vacation plans. Unfortunately, in all the business, it can be easy for us to let our worship slip a little or even drop completely off the map. When the weather turns nice, Satan loves to come out and play. He tempts us to think that we can always go to church next week. The only

problem is that next week comes and Satan is right there, knocking at our heart's door, putting the same thought in our head all over again. Before we know it, summer is over and we've missed out on (or neglected) numerous opportunities to worship the God THAT SAVED US!

As we look intently at this picture of Heaven, however, we clearly see what our LORD wants from us the most. He wants our faithful worship! In this sermon series we have been celebrating our Savior's triumph over sin, death, and the power of the devil, which is to say that we have really been celebrating our access to the Holy City. That's why we sing our Alleluias to the Resurrected Lord! We sing them by coming to where God can be found. This side of Heaven nowhere is our Savior God found more clearly than right here, in His House. By coming to church we hear God speak to us in the Scriptures, we taste the forgiveness He gives us in the Sacrament, and we receive the blessing of His grace. After receiving each of these things, we raise our voices in prayer and praise. We desire to worship the LORD, not because of His command to do so, but in joyful response to His grace in our lives, knowing that we will be together in Heaven one day, joined in eternal worship.

Conclusion:

Most people look at their homes and see a place of security for their children and grandchildren. They see a place for their dogs to run and play. They see a place to hold neighborhood barbeques and to entertain their friends. I have with me the Wausau Buyers' Guide for this year's "Parade of Homes." In it are pictures of some really nice homes. You can actually go to these homes later this week and check them out for yourself. If you go, you'll be amazed at some of the things you see. As nice as these homes are, however, not one of them can offer real and lasting security for you and your family.

Here is another Home Buyer's Guide (The Bible). In it is one more picture of a really nice home. It's the most beautiful home that I've ever seen! Not only can nothing destroy this home, but it IS ours at no cost! You heard me right! Heaven has already been purchased for us. Even though we haven't taken up residency yet, the Resurrected Lord has shown us a picture of it. We see Heaven both (1) as a place of eternal protection and (2) as a place of eternal worship. Either way, *The Resurrected Lord Shows Us a Picture of Heaven!* Now that is something to celebrate! That gives us something to sing about! ***We Sing Our Alleluias to the Resurrected Lord!*** Amen!