

After Here
Kingdom Come
October 3/4, 2009

We are in the fourth week of our “After Here” series and, at last, we are ready to talk about the ultimate “after here” – the place, the time and the existence to which we, as Christians, are called when this present age comes to an end: the world as it will be after Jesus returns; life as it will be when his Kingdom comes in all of its fullness.

And I have to tell you that of all the messages I’ve given in 15 years, this has to be near the top in terms of my own personal excitement and passion because of what this idea has come to mean to me personally. What I’m going to speak about today, in my opinion, is truly one of the most amazing, incredible and exciting teachings of Christianity. And the more I have

come to understand about the big picture of what God is doing in this world, what God is doing in the Kingdom of God – how that’s going to happen in the future – the more I understand why the Apostle Paul once wrote:

*“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” 1
Corinthians 2:9 (NIV)*

The reason Paul makes such an astonishing claim is that what God has planned for those who love Him in the “Age to Come” is the sum total – raised to some exponential power (if that were possible) – of all the hopes and dreams, all the longings and desires that human beings have held since the beginning of history. All of those hopes and dreams, all those longings and desires are like signposts pointing to the day when God will fulfill them.

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It's one of the greatest promises in all of the Bible.

Unfortunately, however, very few people look at it that way. In fact, what most people believe concerning “what God is preparing” is simply not that exciting or motivating. If you were to ask “what is God’s ultimate plan for those who love him?” most would say that it has something to do with Heaven; that it’s some kind of disembodied spiritual existence; maybe floating around on a cloud somewhere strumming a harp; attending an eternal worship service; maybe even being consumed and subsumed into the person of God Himself, whatever *that* means.

And most non-Christians, in reaction to that kind of a vision, say, “How exciting – for you. But as for me, even though it’s not perfect, I kind of *like* some of the stuff on this earth, so I think I will just take a pass on God, on Heaven, on whatever ... and hope for the best. If it turns out that what you all believe about Heaven and the future is true, well, then, good for you. As for me, I think I’ll take my chances on the other options because I’m just not that sure I would enjoy what God is preparing.”

To be totally honest about it, it’s not only non-believers who feel this way. Many Christians do as well. A couple months ago, I had an extended conversation with a young lady – a follower of Jesus – about this subject and she said, “Yeah, I’m looking forward to Jesus returning, but I hope He doesn’t come back too soon because I want to get married. I want to have kids one day.”

And I said, “I can totally understand why you feel that way because I felt the same way when I was your age.”

I didn't want Jesus to come back either, at least not then, because I wanted to get married. I wanted to play in a band, to enjoy my friends, to see the world, and, to be totally honestly I wanted to have sex (that was a big one on my list back then). I wanted to have a career. I wanted to contribute to the world in some way. I wanted to keep playing sandlot football and baseball and golf. I wanted to experience what it meant to be a *human* and *actively* alive, not a *spirit* and *passively* alive – which is what I thought was going to happen to me when Jesus came back.

That's why I told my niece two months ago that I could understand why she felt that way.

And afterwards, I thought to myself “why is it

that people who really do love Jesus can't imagine that what He is preparing for us isn't going to *do away with* the experience and desires of this life, but will *fulfill* them and even *exceed* them?" Why not?

The answer – at least part of it, I believe – is that people simply do not understand what God's vision is and what God's plan is *both for them and for this world*. And a big reason people don't understand quite frankly is because pastors and teachers have focused so much on the "salvation of individual souls" and "the spiritual dimension of reality." Not that those things are unimportant, but sometimes I think we may have overdone it. I think we've unintentionally (or even intentionally) communicated that humans are "spiritual beings having a physical experience" and, therefore, "the spiritual part is the most important part because it's the part that's going to last through all eternity."

That might preach well but it's not biblical. Humans, according to the scripture, are *physical beings* who have a spiritual dimension that was breathed into them by God at the creation of the world. And salvation, or Heaven, or whatever you want to call it, isn't real, doesn't make sense unless it somehow addresses that reality.

I also think that people don't understand God's vision because we pastors and teachers have been a little bit lazy in specifying what exactly we mean when we talk about Heaven and the Age to Come. We're so interested in making sure that we get people *there* that we gloss over (or sentimentalize) what *there* really is and why anyone in their right mind would want to go (beyond the obvious "it's gonna be *lots better* than Hell," which is *really* motivating).

The result of that, I think, is that we have lost sight of the fact that one of the greatest motivations to become a follower of Jesus, which is, one day, you're going to get to experience all that God is going to do in creation. The big payoff for being a believer isn't just what happens in your heart and soul now as good as it is; it's that you are going to get to live in the flesh in the coming Kingdom of Christ.

So, today, I want to try and fill in a little bit of that vision gap, that knowledge gap by fleshing out a much larger picture of "Kingdom Come" – what it's going to look like. And right up front, I'm going to put it in one sentence, what I think the Bible says about this issue and, then, everything I'm going to say after that will hopefully help you understand why this is so and what it means.

Are you ready? Here it is:

God's plan for humanity is not eternal "spirit-hood" in a non-physical dimension called Heaven. Our eternal destiny is life on this planet (and maybe even others) as it was intended from the very beginning ... but even better!

Now I know that some of you are thinking, Rick, that's two sentences, but I threw that first sentence in just *to clarify what the vision is not* because, as I've just tried to illustrate, so many people believe wrongly that *that* is the Christian vision of what is coming.

Really, the vision is in the second sentence:

Our eternal destiny as followers of Jesus is life on this planet (and maybe even others) as it was meant to be from the very beginning ... but even better!

Context: The Big Story

Now, why do I say that's the vision?

Because the end of a story has to have some continuity with what comes earlier in the story. It takes place can in the context of the whole. And what God is going to do at the end of our story works the same way. The end has continuity with and is in context of what he intended from the very beginning.

Let me show you what I mean. Let's go back and review, very briefly, the Big Story of the Bible, particularly as it relates to human beings.

1. In the beginning, God created humans with a purpose: "as my eikons, extend shalom."

"Eikon" is Greek for "image" or "representation" which I'm using – and will be

using in the future – because I think it better communicates the idea that humans beings are intended to be little images or representations of God himself.

The Bible says:

God created humans in his image [i.e as His eikons]. In the image of God [as His eikons] he created them. He created them male and female [so everybody is part of this].

God blessed them and said, “Be fertile, increase in number, fill the earth, and be its master.”
Genesis 1:27-28 (GW)

“Take the great thing I have done; take this world that I have created – a place of flourishing, fulfillment, peace, joy, harmony, abundance and prosperity (which is what we mean by “shalom”) – take *that* and increase it.

Work, play, love, worship, plan, create, share, teach, care for one another in such a way that the world becomes better than I've already made it."

That's the commission and purpose God gave humanity. We were created to do exactly what God did (at a human level).

Of course, you know how the story goes ...

2. We failed and shalom, instead of being extended, was broken.

Adam and Eve, the Bible says, chose to ignore God and to make little gods of themselves (a pattern which continues to this day in all of us and in the human race). And their sin – our sin – caused a terrible thing to happen. Instead of shalom growing and expanding, it was broken and the world became a place of disease, destruction and death.

Even the eikons were broken. Ignorance, arrogance, relational turmoil, idolatry (worshiping things that don't deserve our worship) became part and parcel of human nature. It became a real mess.

But God, who loves us and loves his creation, didn't sit idly by. Instead, God took on flesh and became a man – Jesus of Nazareth – who not only taught us the ways of God and the plan of God, but also fulfilled the cosmic demand for justice in his death on the cross. When property is destroyed, justice demands that someone pay for it. Someone had to pay for the destruction of the world and the eikons, and Jesus did that on the cross.

But God took it even further. He did an amazing thing.

3. He planted the seed of “shalom-

restoration” in the resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus didn't stay dead. God raised him to new life in a new kind of physical body that can never die; the resurrection was the initial act in God's reclaiming and re-creating the cosmos.

Paul describes it like this:

*Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.
1 Corinthians 15:20 (NIV)*

John, in the Revelation writes that ...

Jesus Christ ... is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Revelation 1:5 (NIV)

The idea of firstfruits and firstborn here means that Jesus is the first in a long line of what God

is going to do for the whole world and for those who love him. The restoration of shalom literally and physically began with the resurrection of Jesus.

And the rest of the story is that ...

4. God will complete the restoration of shalom when Jesus returns.

The Apostle Peter put it like this:

He [Jesus] must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. Acts 3:21 (NIV)

He was reflecting the words not only of those prophets but of Jesus himself, who said:

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all

*things, when the Son of Man
sits on his glorious throne ...”
Matthew 19:27-28 (NIV)*

The renewal and restoration of God’s universal shalom will be completed when Jesus comes back.

Okay, so that’s the story, you got it? We were created to be God’s eikons, extending his shalom, but we failed and everything got messed up, including us. But Jesus, in his resurrection from the dead began the process of this restoration which will be completed upon his return.

The question, then, is what will that final restoration look like and for what purpose?
The answer is not as complex as you might think.

When I was in high-school, my father started a business rebuilding old pianos. Every couple of months, he would rent a big truck, and I and a few of my friends would spend a whole Saturday driving all over metropolitan Washington, D.C. helping him haul these huge upright pianos back to our garage where he would rebuild them. He'd pay like \$50 for these pieces of junk that were out of tune, with strings broken, keys broken, they looked bad and they smelled worse.

But one by one, he would go over those old pianos and he would fix whatever was wrong. Sometimes he'd replace strings, sometimes he would put in a whole new set of strings better than they had back in the day it was built. Sometimes he would have to put the pins in. Sometimes he would actually have to rebuild the soundboard. But when he got all the inside right, he would strip off all the old finish and repair the woodwork and then he'd re-stain

and varnish it.

And when he was done the result was incredible. It was like a *brand new* piano. But, of course, it wasn't. It *was* still that crummy old piano we hauled into the garage weeks before, but renewed, restored, and regenerated – made even better than it was in the beginning.

And, all that work he did didn't change the purpose of the piano. We didn't try to cook with it. We didn't wash clothes in it. We didn't burn it to heat the house. That renewed, restored and regenerated piano did what a piano was meant to do in the mind of whoever invented pianos, but better than ever. It made beautiful music that would fill our house (as long as my mom was the one who played it!)

That's what's going to happen to our world, friends. This is where it's all going. This

broken-down, out-of-tune, bad-smelling creation and creatures are going to be renewed, restored and regenerated so that it can be what the creation was meant to be in the mind of the Creator. And those who have chosen to believe in Christ and receive his salvation will also be renewed, restored and regenerated so that we can be and do what the Eikons of God were originally intended to be and do.

That's why I said before that, in "The Age to Come," life will be what it was *meant to be* in this age (and even better!)

One author sums it all up like this:

We were made for earth, to be God's eikons upon the earth. We were meant to live in community with God and we were also designed to reflect God by creatively exercising dominion over our domain,

bringing it to its full potential. This eikon quality is central to how we, as humans, glorify God.

And then he writes:

From Genesis 1 to Revelation 22 (from the beginning to the end of the Bible), God's mission is to have a world filled with his eikons in relationship to him and each other as they exercise co-creative regency of the world.¹

I love the vision of that. Do you see what he's saying? He's saying, God's purpose at the *end* of the story is the same as it was at the *beginning*. The story in *the middle* is about how God worked – and is still working – on behalf of creation and humanity to resolve the mess and re-establish His initial purpose.

God's plan for eternity and humanity is not

eternal “spirit-hood” in a non-physical dimension called Heaven. Our eternal destiny is life on this planet (and maybe even others because we humans have figured out how to travel in space) as it was intended to be from the beginning ... but even better!

Looking at the Details

That’s the big picture and from that, we can infer much about what the age to come is going to be like. For instance, I think there will probably be cool, crisp beautiful fall mornings like this one and perfect fall afternoons for watching your favorite team lose in the football game or playing golf or riding horses or working in the yard. I think that’s going to exist in the world to come.

But the scripture does give us even more detail of how this is all going to come to pass and

what it's going to look like. And what I want to do for the next few minutes is to just read to you – back to back – several passages that together, I think, give us a pretty good clue. (If you're in a message based small group, you'll get a chance to look at these in more detail this week).

Peter writes:

The Day of the Lord [when the new age is going to begin] *will come like a thief* [meaning we don't know when it's going to happen], *and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed* [revealed, laid bare]. 2 *Peter 3:10-11 (ESV)*

Therefore, Paul encourages us:

Each one should be careful how he builds [in this life]. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day [the Day of the Lord] will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.

If what that person has built survives, they will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he or she will suffer loss; even though he or she will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. 1

Corinthians 3:10-15 (NIV)

That day, Peter says:

... God will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with [God's] promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 2 Peter 3:12-13 (NIV)

We are looking for the city that we will have in the future.

Hebrews 13:14 (GW)

... adds the author of Hebrews.

And all of these – the heavens, the earth and the city – are what John writes about in the Revelation:

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and earth had disappeared, and the sea was gone. Then I saw

*the holy city, New Jerusalem,
coming down from God out of
heaven, dressed like a bride
ready for her husband.*

*I heard a loud voice from the
throne say, "God lives with
humans! God will make his
home with them, and they will
be his people. God himself will
be with them and be their God.
He will wipe every tear from
their eyes. There won't be any
more death. There won't be
any grief, crying, or pain,
because the first things have
disappeared."*

*The one sitting on the throne
said, "I am making everything
new." Revelation
21:1-5 (GW)*

John goes on to describe that newness ...

The angel showed me the river

of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 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. 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. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 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. Revelation 22:1-5 (NIV)

That's what the Bible says is going to happen to

the cosmos, but let's get a little bit more personal. What's going to happen to us as individuals?

John writes ...

We are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears [Jesus, in his return], we shall be like him ... 1 John 3:1

So ...

Let me reveal to you a wonderful secret [Paul writes] ... we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown.

For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we

who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 (NLT)

Now, that's just a sampling of the vision that's presented in the scriptures. There are many other passages that we could look at: things that Jesus said, things that were written in the Old Testament, but I think this gives us enough to go on in terms of particulars.

And what I want to do is to list out some of the implications of what we've just heard.

1. There will be continuity between the “stuff” of this age and the next.

The Bible says that there will be a great fire and a melting of the elements but in the meaning of the original language, that's not the same thing as total destruction. The earth and everything that humanity has created will be exposed so that it can be judged, so that it can be fixed and set right; the junk – the irredeemable stuff – will in some way be melted off. I don't know how that works but it's kind of like when you remove the faded, cracked varnish on an old piano to reveal the good, healthy wood underneath.

This matches up well with the logic of this idea, too because there has to be some continuity between what is and what will be. If it's all just

destroyed and God just recreates everything out of nothing, then I think that's a failure, because God's stated purpose was to redeem this world and his people, not start over.²

I think that implies some very practical things about what this world is going to be like, such as the fact that there is still going to be time in this world. (It even says the tree of life produces a *monthly* crop). There will still be water and light, plants, trees, air, sound, food, flesh and blood. There's a great deal of continuity between what *is* in this age and in the Age to Come.

2. In addition, I think the scripture reveals that the next age will feature the best of human culture.

Ever thought that about Heaven, or the life to come, before? Probably not. But this is what the scripture teaches, in fact, one of the great

insights of those who read the whole scripture and look at the end of the story in context of the whole story is that the “restoration of paradise takes place not in a garden, but in a city.” Remember, the setting of Genesis takes place in the garden of Eden, but all the prophecies of the Age to Come are speaking of a city.

Well what happens in a city? Think about it. It's what's happened in cities since the beginning of time. Humans work, there is art, trade, cooking, eating, designing, building, transportation, community, politics, innovation, music, commerce, worship, leadership, entertainment, communication, entrepreneurship, sports ... pretty much everything that makes up human culture ... that is what happens in a city and that is what is going to happen in this city except that this time it will be done a way that enhances shalom, a way that enhances relationships, a

way that reflects the love and care of God.

By the way, apparently, in the next age, there's even going to be some kind of universal healthcare – that bit about “the leaves of the tree of life” being for the “healing of the nations” (did you catch that in the reading?) ... which raises the question of why there still needs to be healing in such a place like this ... well, maybe it's because after a long day of working or a long day of skiing your back still hurts? Or because you scrape your knee when you slide into second base or fall off of a bike.

I think those kinds of activities – and things we humans haven't even thought of yet – will still take place in this age to come.

We're going to have all of eternity to create a new culture, friends ... which, again, makes sense since the calling of humans in this age was to work, play, love, worship, create, think,

plan, share, teach, care in such a way that the world becomes better than it already is. That's what eikons of God do, whether it's in this age or in the age to come. Another thing that I think is apparent from the scripture is,

3. Evil and the curse will be gone.

John says that the curse is removed. Last we read the part he wrote about Satan and death being thrown into the Lake of Fire. No more evil. No more curse of sin working its way into everything.

And if you want to understand the implications of that just ask yourself, think about this ... what would the world today be like if there was no evil at all – at any level? Big evil, little evil. What if every inclination or thought to do something wrong or think higher of yourself and lesser of others was met with a simple: “nah”? What if you and I and the rest of

humanity simply had no interest or attraction to sin?

If you can play that out in your mind in this world, then you have some idea of what God has in store for the next one.

And then ask yourself “what would life be like if the curse of sin was removed from this world? If the natural calamities that destroy life and property; if disease and death simply never occurred?” If you can imagine what that is like in this world, then you have some idea of what God has in store for the world to come. I think the scripture teaches,

4. The joining of Heaven and Earth mean God’s presence will be visible.

Heaven is where is where God lives; Earth is where people live. But one day, those two dimensions are going to be joined when the

city of God descends to this earth. We don't become spiritual; it becomes physical ... which means that we will get to see Jesus himself face to face.

There won't be any questions about "where is God?" That dull mirror through which we see Him in this age will be broken, smashed, removed completely. We'll see face to face. I think the scripture teaches that,

5. We will be the same people but with bodies that do not wear out.

The same people – which means that individual personality continues in the Age to Come.

Christians believe in resurrection, not reincarnation. That means that you and I won't come back as someone else or something else. I'm going to be raised as Rick McGinniss with all the junk removed. All the stuff that drives

everybody crazy, thank you Jesus, will all be taken out. What's going to be left is Rick McGinniss, cleansed and purified and perfected by the grace of God. I will still be me and you will still be you.

Cleansed purified perfected ... that's going to happen to bodies, it's going to happen to people, and it's going to happen to the cosmos ... why? because that's what happened in Jesus' resurrection.

Remember what we read earlier:

*We know that when Jesus
appears, we shall be like him
1 John 3:1*

Jesus is the firstborn of a new creation. Jesus had a physical reality after the resurrection that was continuous with his previous life. People could recognize him physically. They

knew it was Jesus.

But he had some different things about him, right? He had the ability to enter and leave rooms without using the doors or windows! He “ascended” into heaven (whatever that means). There were some aspects of what his body was after his resurrection that were not there before and that’s going to be the same for us. That’s kind of a vision to ponder and rejoice over, especially if you’re old and starting to hurt.

6. We will be given responsibility as co-creators with God (just like now!)

We're going to help God run the universe in the future (whatever that means). Do you remember the story Jesus told about the man who gave his servants money to invest? One servant had doubled his money so the master said, "Good for you. You get to rule over ten

cities." The next servant made 50% on his investment so his master said, "You get to rule over five cities." And to the man who hid his money and didn't make anything at all, the master said, "Give me back what I gave you to invest." (Luke 19:11-27).

That story is a picture of what heaven will be like. We are going to get to use our gifts, talents and abilities to develop the renewed, restored and recreated heavens and earth. Bakers will bake, teachers will teach, singers will sing, builders will build and so on and so forth ... all without the effect of sin's curse. It's going to be great. It's going to be awesome!

Final Thoughts

It's going to be incredible. That's what it's going to be like – well, at least *some* of what it's going to be like: *shalom restored so that we*

who follow Jesus can be and do what the eikons of God are meant to be and do.

I like the way that Cornelius Plantinga summarizes the whole thing.

He writes:

“God isn’t content to save souls; God wants to save bodies too. And God isn’t content to save human beings in their individual activities; God wants to save social systems and economic systems too...

The whole world belongs to God, the whole world has fallen, and so the whole world needs to be redeemed--every last person, place, organization, and program; all 'rocks and trees and skies and seas'; in fact, 'every square inch,' as Abraham Kuyper said.

The whole [world] is a 'theater for the mighty works of God,' first in creation and then in re-creation.”³

Now, with that kind of a vision in front of us - a vision that I think is a little more motivating than floating around on a cloud or going to church through all of eternity - with that kind of a vision, two questions become almost immediately obvious:

1. If that's what's coming ... if that's where God wants this all to go ... what are we still doing here?

Why are we still here? The simple and traditional answer is “we’re here to tell other people about Jesus so that they can be part of what God is going to do for the world in the Age to Come.” And that *is* accurate, but it’s also inadequate.

So, I'm going to add one more week to this series and do a message called, appropriately enough, "what are we still doing here?" and kind of lay out a framework that more fully answers that question.

And that particular message next week will be a springboard to several series in which we'll try to flesh out some very practical ways the implications of all this as it relates to work, to economics, to marriage and family, and then to our relationship to God and the non-Christian world around us. Obviously, that will take several months, but that's where we're going. And I'm excited about it because I think seeing This Age in the light of the Age to Come can make a real difference in our everyday lives.

"If that's what's coming, what are we still doing here?" That's the first question.

But there's another question and it's similar to the first one, but not exactly:

2. If this is where it's all going, why doesn't God just get to it now? Why wait?

If God knows what He wants to do with the world and the human race, why doesn't he just push the first domino, send Jesus back and bring this age to an end?

That's a great question, one that's been raised since the first century, in fact.

And the Apostle Peter then gave the answer and it still makes sense today.

Dear friends, since you are looking forward to this [talking about the return of Jesus and the age to come], make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with

him [because that's the only way you get to participate is if you're spotless, blameless and at peace with God.] Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation ... 2 Peter 3:14-15 (NIV)

“The Lord’s patience means salvation.”

“God is delaying the Parousia – the kingly return of Jesus,” Peter says, “so that more and more people can be saved. “

And that only makes sense because remember what God’s goal was in the beginning? An earth filled with eikons, a world filled with men and women who bear his image; who reflect his character and creativity; who extend the shalom the He creates. But all the eikons, because of sin, are broken and so God is allowing the good news of Jesus to spread all over the world through many centuries so that

millions and millions of the broken eikons can turn to Christ and be re-born in spirit. And one day, God's goal will be met – there will be enough of these reborn eikons to fill the new world – and then Jesus will return.

“The Lord's patience means salvation.”

And with that in mind, let me one more time offer some of you the opportunity to say “yes” to what God has done for you in Christ, this incredible salvation not only of your soul but also your body and everything else in creation.

And I want to do so with the words that are part of the closing of the book of Revelation (this is the big point of Revelation):

The Spirit and the bride [the church] say, "Come! [Come to Jesus]" And let him who hears say, "Come to Jesus!"

*Whoever is thirsty, let him
come; and whoever wishes, let
him take the free gift of the
water of life. Revelation
22:17 (NIV)*

Friend, if you're looking at your life and looking at this world and saying, "there's got to be more, there's got to be a better way" ... guess what? – that is the thirst of a "broken eikon." That's the Holy Spirit of God saying to you right now, "come to Jesus." And that's this church saying to you, "come to Jesus." That's the people around you who have already heard this message and received it saying "yeah, come on, it's great."

The water of life is yours for the taking friend. It's free.

Would you pray with me?

Father in Heaven, what a gospel; what good news this is that you have not turned your back on your creation and those created in your image, that one day you are going to take *all of it* and renew, restore and regenerate it. You're going to completely restore shalom to this world so that we can be and do what your eikons are meant to be and do.

And you invite us to be part of it all; to experience a resurrection from the dead into a new body and into a new world – this world, the way it was intended to be. What a vision, what a plan! And God, you offer all of this to us for free because Jesus has done all the work in his death and resurrection. All we need to do is to confess, repent and believe. So God, some of us are going to need to say this to you right now:

I confess, God that I am a broken eikon. I do not reflect your image. I do not reflect

your character. I do not do your will. I am a sinner in need of restoration. I need a savior.

And I repent God – I change my mind about thinking I can live my life without You. I change my mind about thinking You are the enemy, that you're the problem.

And God, I believe that You loved me so much that you became flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and you came to Earth to live the life I should have lived and die the death I should have died. And then you rose again to new life on the third day so that I, too, could have new life – not only in This Age but in the Age to Come.

What a plan, what good news! Thank you God.

In Jesus name, amen.

Friends I hope that what you've heard today inspires and encourages you. And, I hope for some of you that this is the day that you cross the line. And if this is time when you say "I need to follow Jesus," that's what we do baptism for. Francine explained earlier, there's a card in the program and as the band does this closing song, you may take out the card and think "I need some information about this because I'm ready to say yes to Jesus." And some of you, you understand all this, for you this song is just an opportunity to pray, praise and thank Jesus for what he's going to do in the age to come.

ENDNOTES

¹ See http://krusekronicle.typepad.com/kruse_kronicle/2008/06/acting-with-tentative-finality-in-an-alreadynot-yet-world.html

² Kruse

³ Plantinga, *Engaging God's World*, p. 95-96