

Good morning Cornerstone! It is good to be with you this morning. Today we are finishing our sermon series called 'Wounds'. Where we have been calling out the hurts, the scars, and the traumas that we bear in this life, bringing them to light to find healing in God's word, in his church and in himself.

Today our scripture is going to be found in Revelation 22. So if you would like to follow along with us, we'll give you some time to turn there in your bibles. If you do not have a paper bible and would like one, we have some available for you in the back. You can also follow along with us today on the app with the scripture and our sermon notes available to you there.

But before we dive in the teaching today, let's read a part of our passage this morning together which comes from the book of Revelation 22:1-5. So will you stand with me out of reverence for God's word as we read this truth powerfully as the body of Christ.

[1] SCRIPTURE Revelation 22:1-5

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.¹"

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

INTRO

[2] When we talk about our wounds, we want to know there is an end and there is a solution. Sure, we have the end and the final solution that is death. When we die none of the hurts or scars that we carry now will matter. Because that life will be gone and we will be on the other side. But we have to see that there is a solution in the now. An ability to find healing in the present. The solution that we are seeking is in Jesus in the kingdom now and the kingdom that is to come in eternity.

The book of revelation is often a highly debated topic in the church world. It is either met with fear and often avoided or people will hold such a firm position on it that it can become a dividing point between believers when it shouldn't be. There are 3 main views of the timeline of the book of Revelation. Each position bases its timeline on the millennium or the 1,000 year reign of Christ described in Rev. 20. Some believe it to be a literal thousand years and a physical kingdom others believe it to be a figurative 1,000 years and a spiritual kingdom. Others will take the position of an amalgamation of them.

This morning we do not have the time nor do I believe all of us have had enough coffee to dive into all of the details. Or attempt to try and make sense of these timelines. For the purposes of our discussion this morning we have to see that this book is presented in the now and the not yet.

There is a message of urgency. The author, who most scholars believe to be the apostle John, thought the message of what was going to happen was going to happen soon maybe even in his lifetime.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Re 22:1-5.

I say that it is in the now and not yet because there are things that are revealed to John in this letter that are signs for the church to be watchful. Things to be looking for in their daily lives but there are also things that are revealed to John that are going to come that we haven't seen, and will happen at the end of time.

This letter and these visions came to John while he was exiled on the island of Patmos. This island was used as a place by the Roman empire to remove prisoners from society. It was quite precarious in the 1st century, it was very remote and full of dangerous cliffs. John was more than likely sent there because of his preaching of the gospel and the emperor at the time probably hoped that John would die there. Fortunately for John the Emperor Domitian² died before John, and after that John was permitted to leave and return to Ephesus, where he died in 99AD³.

While he was on the island it says in chapter 1 that John was visited by an angel to reveal these things to him. John was to write them down to share his vision with the churches in Asia minor⁴. Everything that is written down in this letter were all things that John saw in the vision that he received from this angel that came from God.

Some may think this sounds familiar, an angel coming to someone while they are alone and telling them they have a message from God and that they need to write it down. This is not like John Smith from Mormonism or Mohammad from Islam. We will talk about this but in a minute.

The letter is full of imagery that John attempted to describe in the best way that he knew how. I think a lot of the things he saw he really wasn't sure what he was looking at so a lot of these images are phrased in the metaphorical because John knew he was limited in his understanding of what he was seeing.

The reason that a lot of people will approach this letter with apprehension is because there are a lot of things that are described that can be honestly terrifying. I talked about a few weeks ago where Crystal and I studied the book of Acts on our way to Texas. On the way back I wanted to study Revelation, we got to chapter 2 and Crystal said her anxiety couldn't handle it so we had to stop.

This letter does convey the reality of evil in some honestly terrifying imagery, which can be disconcerting for a lot of people. However, the overall message of this letter is not meant to strike fear but to instill hope for the church in the things that are to come. This letter communicates that no matter what is to come, opposition, persecution, judgement and cataclysmic destruction, all of it is working out to fulfill the Lord's purpose because he is on the throne through it all. Jesus has prevailed when he overcame the world⁵ and took the punishment for sin on the cross. John's message is that where Jesus has already prevailed one day he will come again in full power to fully vindicate his people and they will dwell in his presence for eternity in the new heaven and the New earth.

BODY

The passage that we are looking into this morning is this description of what John saw in his vision of the new heaven and the new earth. What John saw was the completed fulfilment of the restoration of Eden in Heaven and the new Jerusalem in the very last chapter Revelation.

² John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016).

³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/apostle-John-die.html>

⁴ Rev. 1:4

⁵ John 16:33

The imagery of Eden creates a poetic end to all life on earth. All of creation started in perfection in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Humanity ruined creation by bringing sin into it. God then works all of human history and our future in order to bring it back to its restored glory. The Bible starts with Eden and ends with Eden.

Now the fact that this letter is poetic does make it evidenced of scripture. What makes it validated over things like the writings of John Smith or Mohammad is that the vision that John received not only demonstrated a vast knowledge of Jewish scriptures but the vision of John was a fulfillment of every prophecy that is about the end times in scripture. We will talk about all of the Old Testament references but a few examples from the earlier parts of the book of Revelation. There is a constant image that is presented of the Son of Man⁶. Something that Jesus referred to himself as in Mark 14:62, which is a reference to Daniel 7:13.

Also in chapter 1 there is a reference to the 7 spirits which is a mirroring of God being a sevenfold spirit⁷. The point that I am trying to make is that we can trust this is actually from God as opposed to other "revelations" because this historically is verified to be written before the canon was closed, with the death of the apostles, but also with how it aligns with scripture in both old and new testament.

That being said when we look at this picture of the Eden, the one that exists at the end in eternity, we can see this same picture being drawn in the other books of the bible that are apocalyptic. I'm going to try and reference as many as I can, all of the others to the best of my ability, will be in the notes should you care to read them.

Let look into our passage. Like I said this is a picture of Eden the end of John's vision into the eternal and everlasting kingdom of God in the new Heaven and new Earth, the fully restored Jerusalem.

[3] Revelation 22:1-2a

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb² through the middle of the street of the city;"

John points specifically to this river that is flowing out of the throne of God and from 'the Lamb', that is Jesus, and John calls it the water of life. So a couple of things when God created the Garden of Eden the land had vegetation in Gen 2 but the Garden had not been created. God made man and before his eyes he created the Garden. God created the life in the place but then he created a river to flow through it.

[4] Genesis 2:10

"A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers."

The purpose of the water was to sustain life in the Garden. But that of course was simply water. H₂O. The thing that makes up 60% of the human body. Water through any culture is always associated with life.

I always love to watch those survival shows. 'Dual Survival' was my favorite because they always had two guys that were complete opposites of each other. One was a hippy that never wore shoes and the other

⁶ Mark 2:10; 8:31

⁷ Isaiah 11:2

was like army special ops guy that bleeds red, white and blue. I always liked them because I would watch it on my couch with a bag of Cheetos and tell crystal, 'yeah I can do that'. Or be pointing out all the things the people are doing wrong in the show 'Alone'.

I digress, in all of those shows they are constantly looking for water or a water source for two reasons. Often times if you follow water you are more likely to find settlements or civilization if you follow a water source for long enough. The second and most obvious is to have a source of water for nourishment. They say you can go 40-50 day without food, 10 days without sleep, but only 3 days without water.

All throughout scripture water has a significance to life and cleansing. At the wedding in Cana, Jesus had the servants fill stone jars with water that would have typically been used for ceremonial cleansing⁸. He turned the water into wine. Symbolizing the communion that would come later as a sign of his new covenant. Jesus being the truth that cleanses us. Jesus talked about several times about how belief in him brings living water within those who believe. He said it with the woman at the well⁹ and on the last day of the feast of Booths in John 7

[5] John 7:37-38

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' "

This river that John is seeing in the new Jerusalem in the book of Revelation is the physical representation of the living water that comes from Christ that is described in these passages. This water that is made of crystal. A river that is so pure that it shines. It is the water that is life, and its source, is the throne of God and that Lamb that sits upon it, which is Jesus. This river or the water flowing from God or from the presence of God is mentioned in OT Prophecies of Ez 47:1 and Zech 14:8.

[6] Ezekiel 47:1

"Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar."

As well see in the next verse, this water is the only thing that nourishes the tree of life.

[7] Revelation 2:2b

"also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

The first time that we see this tree of life is in the garden¹⁰. It is mentioned that it is created but it becomes as point of focus when Adam and Eve are removed from the garden. God does so to prevent them from living eternally¹¹.

The tree of life in this completion of creation, it produces, thrives, and grows from the river. The tree being on both sides of the river, is the right of eternity belongs to those in the presence of God alone. This Tree being on both sides of the river is a fulfillment of Ez 47:12. This is also a fulfillment of Rev 2:7,

⁸ John 2:6

⁹ John 4:10

¹⁰ Gen 2:9

¹¹ Gen 3:24

where God instructs the church to eat from the tree of life to live eternally, something previously restricted from humanity.

After the Fall of Adam and Eve the life eternal on earth was something God did not want them to have in the garden. If they did that would mean they would live eternally separated from him by their sin. However now in the new Jerusalem we have been restored. The tree of life produces leaves that they are used to heal humanity from all that ails them, even death itself. The Tree also produces fruit in a variety. One fruit for each month symbolic of eternal life being granted to us forever. According to the next verses it is an eternal life in the presence of God.

[8] Revelation 22:3

“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.”

This was an identifier or the wrath and judgement of God would be completely satisfied. This New Jerusalem exists after the wrath has been poured out. There is nothing left in existence that is doomed to future judgment. Its done and over with.

[9] Zechariah 14:11

“And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security.”

This shows not only that God’s wrath and judgement are no more, but that sin, the curse that humanity brought upon creation, is no more. There is nothing under judgment. Nothing accursed because sin is no more and creation has been healed.

In this place where there is no sin, there is no fallenness, no brokenness, and no punishment. This is where God is sitting on his throne, and we will worship him. We worship him because we have been redeemed, ransomed, and purchased with his blood, away from our sin and back to him. We belong to God as his creation, and his children.

[10] Revelation 22:4

“They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.”

There are 2 things being pointed out here, this restoration as a new creation is internal and external. It is a full and complete change that will happen to all believers in this new Jerusalem.

Internal because of the removal of sin. It is being pointed out that the people there will be able to see the face of God. This was previously impossible or resulted in physical death because God is so holy and pure that because of man’s sin they would be killed in his presence¹². Our sin rendered us incapable of seeing God and disqualified us from service¹³, unless we went about it in very specific ways according to the code of the priest in Leviticus¹⁴. But in this passage in Revelation we are freely worshipping, in the presence of God seeing him Face to Face. So internal we are completely renewed and restored.

¹² Exodus 33:20

¹³ Isaiah 6:5

¹⁴ Lev 4, 14

But we are also completely restored and redeemed externally as well. This is why it describes believers having his name on their heads. This was foreshadowed in the Law. The priest when they would offer worship in the temple they would have a golden plate on their foreheads with an inscription that read 'Holy to the Lord'¹⁵. It was a way to deem their service to God in the giving of worship. In the same way we will be given to worship like the priest in the kingdom. Set apart for his service and in worship to him. It was an outward sign of ownership. We have been fully committed, redeemed, set apart and made holy by God for his glory.

This last verse points back again to the source of our restoration and the complete restoration of creation from sin.

[11] Revelation 22:5

"And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever."

In this completed redemption there will be no more physical darkness or spiritual darkness. We will never be away from his glory or presence. The light that we will experience will be the pure light of the glory of God that will shine all around us. God will be our light and with no darkness we will never be away from him. He will never be far from us or never be hidden from us. Jesus said in...

[12] John 8:12

"Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

This is what that light and life will look like when it is fully complete and all the things that have been said about heaven has come to pass. The Lord God will be our light. His glory will shine all around us. Just like in our favorite verse to read around Christmas time.

[13] Luke 2:9-11

"And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'"

GOSPEL

[14] The craziest thing about all of this restoration, is not the everlasting life that we will find in the tree or the water. It is not even being in the presence of God or seeing God face to face and surviving, but it is that we will reign together with Christ as co-heirs to the kingdom of God¹⁶. We who were once sinners, rebels and enemies of God will rule and reign with Christ. Jesus' restoration is not that we are just permitted in the presence but are elevated to be reigning with Christ in this eternal kingdom. It is all because of the grace and mercy of God.

This amazing thing that we are to receive has nothing to do with what we have done. You cannot earn this great honor through good works. We don't enter the presence of God by being a good person, which

¹⁵ Exodus 28:36-38

¹⁶ Romans 8:17

means we definitely cannot earn a place of honor in the kingdom for something as simple as being a good person. Even that is an impossible feat when God holds the scales of good and perfect.

The beautiful thing about the good news of great joy, is not that we are just forgiven but we are equipped with a righteousness. A righteousness we do not deserve. We are completely redeemed because of the death and resurrection of the Son of God that came as a man, took on the sins of the world and died a brutal death to save you!

How amazing the things that await us in this prophecy!

APPLICATION

As beautiful and hopeful that picture is, it is absolutely something that we can and should wait in eager anticipation of its fulfillment. However, it is not the only thing that give us hope. We do not have a hope just far off in the distance at some unknown time or when we face death whichever comes first.

As I said in the beginning this kingdom that is described by John is both in the now and the not yet. We will absolutely experience the full and complete restoration of our soul apart from sin then, but that is the not yet. The now is the healing and hope that we find in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

[15] We find that in God there is healing in the now and the not yet.

The tree of Life that John Describes talks about the river of Crystal and the leaves that heal and the internal and external cleansing for the glory of God is what is still coming. It is something that is going to happen, but that does not mean that we endure this broken world without hope for each and every moment of life.

We have faced all kinds of trauma, wounds, scars and brokenness. All of them have been because of sin and the brokenness that we have as a reality in this world. However, Jesus has overcome the world¹⁷ and through the holy Spirit we will not be consumed by it. Even though sometimes it feels like it already has.

[16] I think of it like climbing a mountain.

I don't know how many of you have ever climbed a mountain before, I know Illinois is just riddled with them so not so many hands all at once. If you have ever climbed to a mountain peak above the tree line, you know how physically and mentally exhausting it can be. You hike for hours. The paths are jagged, and sometimes you need to scramble with your hands and feet up rocks and steep inclines. Crawling on your hands and knees even.

To make matters worse, occasionally you encounter a false summit. The peak you thought was the end, and turns out to be the half way point. What keeps you going? The finish. You know that the top will be amazing. It will make all the difficult moments worth it.

We right now are climbing the mountain. It's hard. Sometimes we feel like we are fighting through life on our hands and knees or facing a wall that seems impossible to overcome. But we keep fighting, not because it's easy, but because we know what is waiting for us at the top.

¹⁷ John 16:33

The best part is that this is not a lonely journey. We are all hiking the same mountain. Growing to be more Christ-like is never a life you work at on your own¹⁸. As the body of Christ, we push each other to keep going forward, even when its hard. As Iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another¹⁹. When we are beaten up and feel broken, we encourage each other²⁰. Bearing each others burdens²¹.

We continually remind each other what we are doing this all for. We are headed up the mountain. We are healing as a community. We are working for the kingdom in the right now and the not yet.

We can find healing when we confess our sins one to another and to our father. James says that we are to confess our sins one to another and pray for each other so that we can be healed²². We are here for each other, and we find healing in his Body, that is the church.

But even when you feel alone like you are separated from the body, those that are saved are never separated from Christ. The book of Hebrews says that God will never leave you nor forsake you²³. When we face trials of many kinds we are to count it all as joy when we suffer for the Name²⁴.

Healing from our wounds can be easy when you go to the father first. When we know him as the source of our healing. We know that in the future our full and complete redemption from sin will come but that is not yet. We can find the healing in the hardship in the right now because Christ is our hope.

[17] For you that are hurting and are broken, God is where we find healing in the now and the not yet. We Go to our father first, something we will have a chance to do in a moment. Confess the things that hurt you, lay them at his feet. Lean into the work of the Holy Spirit in your life as he molds and shapes you to be more like Christ, Let him heal those wounds right now and in the not yet.

But the second is lean into the body of Christ. Build relationships with the people that are climbing this mountain with you. Do life with people. Let them in on the things that are happening in life.

They say that relationships are built through ATV, Authenticity, Transparency and Vulnerability. This means building lasting and deep relationships. This is a 2 way street you invest in them and they invest in you. Build a life with the people who are broken but are seeking the healing now and have confidence in the healing that is to come.

As you encourage each other bear each other's burdens, push each other forward suffer together, motivate each other to seek healing in God in the now and wait in eager anticipation for the healing in the not yet.

[18] PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Let's take some time for reflection we have been talking about some really hard things. The wounds that have hurt us deeply right now is where we are going to find healing from it. As the church united in

¹⁸ Hebrews 10:25

¹⁹ Proverbs 27:17

²⁰ 1 Thessalonians 5:11

²¹ Galatians 6:2

²² James 5:16

²³ Hebrews 13:5-6

²⁴ James 1:2

Christ climbing the mountain with our eyes on the peak. Take this time to pray with each other maybe its just the people you came with or the person next to you. Pray for each other encourage one another to keep going. Because the kingdom of God is what we are working towards in the now and the not yet.

COMMUNION