

# The Lamb of God Lives 6) To Satisfy All My Needs

Revelation 22:12-21 • June 2, 2019 • Seventh Sunday of Easter



It's that time of year again. Spring is nearing its end and summer is just around the corner. You can tell it by many things. The days are a little longer, the air is warmer, the flowers are brighter. You can more than feel it, see it and smell it; you can hear it. Payson is one of those towns in which you can actually hear summer approaching. I'm not talking about rushing spring water. It's a different tune that comes each year as summer approaches. It starts off as a faint sound in the distance. At first you wonder if you're hearing things. Maybe even a melody gets stuck in your head before you realize why. Its chiming sound grows louder, and you realize what you hear is a sign of the approaching summer. It's the call of the ice-cream truck. In my neighborhood and down my street you can see it making several stops as children chase after it. They hurry to gather their coins and rush out the door. They can't wait to get a hold of the sweet satisfying treats. Today we hear another call to enjoy something that satisfies. It is far more than a temporary treat on hot day. Scripture calls us to come and enjoy what satisfies all our needs forever. We finish our series looking through parts of the book of Revelation today as we consider how the Lamb of God lives 6) to satisfy all my needs.

We've seen many warnings and comforts in our brief look at the book of Revelation this Easter season. The book begins by introducing the living Lamb of God, Jesus. It then goes on to reveal how throughout history he will be with his Church. He will guide it. And through all the persecution, false teaching, and spiritual dangers, he remains our bright morning star. He has a plan for all of us to bring us out of tribulation so that we are standing in joy before him. Last week we caught a glimpse of the new creation. He will make all things new and restore our bodies as he gives us a new home free from sin and its curse. We will be forever free from all our sin, and our enemies. Lasting peace will be securely ours. To conclude our series we jump to the final the final words in your Bible. And it is in these closing verses that we are invited to have what truly satisfies.

To begin with you shouldn't expect to wait long for Jesus. His closing statement at the end of the book is "I am coming soon!" All the signs Jesus spoke of and all the events foretold in this book have been fulfilled. We can read with the expectation that Jesus will return any moment. The living Lamb of God will soon come to carry out everything foretold in this book.

That includes fulfilling the fearsome pictures of judgment found in this book. When Jesus comes it will be as a holy judge. He says he's coming soon to "reward each person according to what they have done." Even though it is translated as "reward" that term carries the idea of payback. It is giving someone what they deserve for good... or bad. Jesus is echoing what he said before and what the Psalms and the apostle Paul all mentioned. God will pay back every evil with justice and judgment.

We might be tempted to think that we're mostly good and going to be rewarded by Jesus. But this phrase ought to make us uneasy. You and I upon hearing it will immediately start to wonder if we have good or evil coming our way. Do we deserve a good reward or payback for wrong? We start to think like the desperate child who is adding up their coins wondering if they can afford a treat from the ice-cream truck. As the child starts to count it up, they worry they might not have enough to be satisfied. The Scriptures reveal that on our own even our good deeds are tainted with evil. And don't forget the debt of evil deeds on our record! They must be dealt with! What good is an ice-cream treat if your hands are full of mud? What good is it trying to cash in for any reward from God if our guilt must be dealt with? Each one of us has to make an account for every evil deed. And Jesus tells us that he judges not only sinful actions, but every evil thought as well! God is coming soon to give payback for all those.

And you can't just change the rules to make yourself good or hope to avoid his judgment. Jesus doesn't come as someone new onto the scene. Even though he is coming soon, he is the eternal one. Jesus is the "Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." He has seen every evil act ever committed. He knows every selfish thought of the heart. There is no way to bribe, payoff, or run from him when he comes. Our reward must be paid out. And the Scriptures reveal that the only wage we have earned is death and hell.

We've read of glimpses of the beautiful peace in the new creation and the new Jerusalem. But how can we ever enter this city? The Psalmist said, "Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart..." (Psalm 24) Is yours clean enough?

Is there any comfort in the closing portion of this book for us? Can we ever be confident that we'll be satisfied with good things from our God? Thank God we don't have to stand counting our coins to know if we can afford the entrance fee. We don't have to worry about having clean enough hands to enjoy his blessings. We don't have to because our entrance into the new creation isn't based on our deeds. It is based on how clean we have become through his cleansing. "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city." This picture of washing comes up earlier in Revelation and we read about it. "Those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7) That's who will stand in the new creation. All who trust in Jesus and have found cleansing from sin by turning to him for it.

And we find in his new creation something which we've been chasing after all our lives! We find full and lasting satisfaction. We get the right to enter the city and to eat of the tree of life. In Eden there were two trees. The tree of the knowledge of

good and evil and the tree of life. Adam and Eve chose to disobey and to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They tried to satisfy themselves by chasing after their own sinful desires. That's what we've chased after all our lives. So many hours, days, and years are centered on seeking something that will satisfy and last. But what we find for ourselves can never satisfy. It can only lead to separation from God and loss of paradise. It can only lead to discontent and despair as we chase after what is evil and experience what evil tastes like. Our first parents experienced evil as they ate of that tree.

But in the new creation there will only be one option: the tree of life. It satisfies with everlasting life. There will be no end. There will be no way to fail and lose out on access. Adam and Eve lost paradise once. Never again will they lose this new creation. You and I will forever enjoy the picture in Revelation 22, access to the water of life and to the tree of life.

Outside of paradise will be all who loved to satisfy their desires apart from God. They are "the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." In our culture dogs are most often tame and breed to be house pets. But picture the wild and savage dogs that John refers to here. They would snap at you, snarl at you if you dare enter their territory, and reject your authority. That's what sin does. It opposes and rejects God and barks at his very goodness. The darkness of sin causes people to crave their own desires and hate God.

But God has called us out from the love of darkness. The spread of the gospel in Word and sacrament brought about your cleansing. This letter goes out by the Spirit and the Bride to "the churches." The first seven churches that received this letter were all struggling. Many faced persecutions. Many were slipping away from the faith and into idolatry. Many were suffering persecution and attacks for their faith. Many were tolerating sexual immorality. But despite all that many were also still holding faithfully to Christ even as the devil raged against them and others turned away. To the rest the call went out to repent, turn aside from love of sinning to forgiveness and the love of God. We will face many of the same struggles, the same attacks, and be guilty of the same failures. We have the same need for repentance and holding on in faith to Jesus.

And through the Spirit and the Church Jesus calls us now. He is the bright morning star in this world filled with darkness and sin. He is the one who both comes before David according to his divine nature and was born of the line of David to save us according to his human nature. He is the God-man our perfect Savior who died in our place. He thirsted on the cross so that we would never thirst for God's goodness and love. He is the living Lamb of God who calls out. "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!' Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life." Now is the time. Like when we hear the ice-cream truck coming near, we know Jesus is coming near, and his new creation is near. Listen to him calling out through his Spirit and his church.

Today God calls to you and all who have ears "Come." It is the power of the gospel invitation which changes hearts and turns them back to God. It converts the wicked with hands full of vile deeds. It brings back the straying believer to wake up from their slumber and the dangers of sin. "Come." Right now that invitation rings out. Here the term "the Bride" refers to the church which the Spirit uses to spread his gospel call. Through the believers in his church calling out with his gospel he brought you to faith. You are cleansed and have your robes washed in the blood of Jesus because someone called you. And it wasn't just them. It was also the Spirit working through that gospel. For whenever the church calls out with the gospel and makes this invitation, there the Spirit is also working to change hearts. Still today through your support, your prayers, and your words the gospel calls out from this congregation. And through this congregation's support it calls out "come" from many others. We train others in ministry and send them out as more voices. Our student teacher here this summer received her training through the Spirit calling out through the church "come." This calling goes out from our congregation and church body to all parts of the world "Come to Jesus. He alone satisfies your soul!" And all the church throughout the world, the Bride of Christ calls out by the Spirit "Come and wash your robes in his blood."

And it's all a free gift! "Come and take the free gift of the water of life." The cleansing that comes in baptism is free. It was freely given to you and God wants you to baptize all nations for free. The gift of cleansing in baptism is yours through faith in Jesus. It is free because he paid the price. He paid it with his blood on the cross.

We've taken only a small and brief look at Revelation these past six weeks. But we've found that the Lamb of God lives to do more than we could ever imagine! He does it all for us! Allow me to share briefly some words from someone who came to love this book after many years of reading it and struggling with it. He came to realize what a treasure it is along with all of God's Word. He spoke of the great lasting comfort found in this book. *"In a word, our holiness is in heaven, where Christ is, and not in the world, before men's eyes, like goods in the marketplace. Therefore let there be offenses, divisions, heresies and faults; let them do what they can! If only the word of the gospel remains pure among us, and we love and cherish it, we won't doubt that Christ is with us, even when things are at their worst. As we see here in this book, that through (and beyond) all plagues, beasts, and evil angels Christ is nonetheless with his saints, and wins the final victory."* (Martin Luther, LW 35:411).

The ice-cream truck and other things bring some satisfaction to those who can afford it. But it can't last, no matter how much you spend on it. Our lasting satisfaction is a free gift from the Lamb of God. It is access to the tree of life and entrance into the new creation. Our Bible concludes with this beautiful invitation and call. God invites the sinner who has been cleansed by Christ to everlasting joy in his new creation. Until then, we are sustained and strengthened by these words. Until then we join with all those who trust in the Living Lamb of God in continual listening for his return. He calls and invites us to be truly satisfied. The Lamb of God lives to give me lasting satisfaction. Come quickly, Lord!