

Revelation 22:6-21

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning and welcome to Holy Trinity Church. We are so glad that you are here today. And you've arrived on a Sunday where we conclude the opening series of 2017, a series we titled Resolved 2017, Getting a Vision of Christ.

It was my conviction at the outset of the year that if we see the manifold strength of Christ in the book of Revelation, it would affect the lives that we would lead until he comes.

And so over these first five weeks of the year, we've seen the risen Christ and the reigning Christ and the returning Christ. And today, the closing words, not only of Revelation by way of its epilogue, but the end of the scriptures themselves, give us yet another vision of Jesus.

The image is of one standing a bit away from you, yet within your hearing, almost as though he were around the corner, yet saying, I am coming soon.

Music theory classifies a fugue as one form of composition among many.

[1 : 3 3] In the most general terms, and believe me, I was not raised in the conservatory, but the locker room. In the most general terms, I am told that a fugue brings with it an entrance, in a sense, with a voice.

A musical, instrumental notation that would lay down the subject of the piece. And then and only then, once the subject is laid down, in a different key, more than not, that line would be amplified and played upon.

And these two would work with one another, voice upon voice, always returning to the standard that carried the whole.

One of the more famous fugues in history is Bach's unfinished fugue, called the Art of Fugue.

It was an unfinished work, for he died before completing it. The surviving manuscript is famous for other reasons. Let me explain. A handwritten note near the unfinished measure number 239 indicates, by way of structure, that Bach may have been attempting to put his own name, that is musically his own name, into the piece.

[3 : 1 0] The musical note B was laid down, and then A, and then C, and here I've got to trust the musicians.

The B flat corresponding to, in English, what would be H, Bach. Now there's some debate among scholars whether this was indeed intended or not.

It makes for a wonderful contemporary story. Did the composer intend to write himself into the script of this unfinished fugue?

Was it his purpose, musically speaking, to be the voice and the standard of what everything returned to?

I've chosen to open this message with that definition and Bach's unfinished fugue, because I feel it's the easiest way for those of us who have just heard the text read, to illustrate its structure and its resounding standard.

[4 : 26] Four times a voice is presented, and each time returning to the standard line which holds the whole, namely the voice of Jesus, I am coming.

I'm coming soon, almost by way of building call and response. And here's the fun part. Unlike Bach's unfinished fugue, where you're wondering whether the author, the composer, intended to place himself in the script, in the Bible there can be no doubt.

Jesus, in the epilogue of Revelation, is the subject of the ending of all the scriptures.

In other words, that which God reveals is by Jesus, of Jesus, from Jesus, and goes out on the name of Jesus.

It's a stunning ending to a long, coherent word and revelation that has been given over thousands of years.

[5 : 44] Jesus himself unashamedly writing himself into the script. Just take a quick glance. You'll see it. He is the standard to which the text returns. Verse 7, And behold, I am coming soon.

You'll see it again in verse 12. Behold, I am coming soon. You'll see him unabashedly.

All letters in place. Verse 16, I, Jesus, is there in full four until the end. Verse 20, again, finally, fourfold, the words of Christ, surely, I am coming soon.

So in other words, what you have in this apparently coherent ending of the scriptures is a line laid down, a voice that emerges, and the standard word of Christ that anchors the whole, fourfold.

The first voice there in verse 6, that of an angel. And he said to me, that is the angel, these words are trustworthy and true, and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.

[7 : 03] You can almost hear it being played out on the right hand of the organist. And yet underneath it, the standard to which it is there, verse 7, and behold, notice the voice change.

I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the word of the prophecy of this book. this first part, the voice of the angel, the witness of the angel, the testimony of the angel, the declaration of the angel, and the standard word of Christ, presents, I think, beyond a doubt, where the book opened.

Remember, Revelation 1.1, there was an angel, which came, to minister a revelation to John, and the language here is very similar.

The angel, I think, depicted here, which comes in at the end of the book, is none other than the angel, which appeared at the very beginning. The revelation of Jesus Christ, 1.1, which God gave him, to show his servants, the things, here it is, in our own text, as it was in 1.1, the things that must soon take place.

And he made it known, by sending his angel, to the servant John. This angel, now appearing in the epilogue of the book, these words, he says, at its conclusion, that I've been laying out, concerning the manifold vision of Christ, are trustworthy, and true.

[8 : 35] Indeed then, Jesus, providing the line, that anchors the book, and the scriptures as a whole, I am coming soon. How are we supposed to take this?

Conventional wisdom, restricts, the coming soon, to the final consummation. In other words, from our vantage point, when we read these words, we limit them, to the ultimate end, to a time in the future.

The technical term, in the scriptures throughout, would be the parousia, the coming, of Christ. Jesus speaks, of that kind of coming, in Matthew 24.

Paul speaks, of it in 1st and 2nd Thessalonians. It's elsewhere, in the scriptures, back and loaded, when we read it, through conventional wisdom, we are assured, that when Jesus says, I'm coming soon, it is boxed up, as something, all to the future.

Yet, yet, through the book of Revelation, we have seen, something mysterious, in the coming of our Lord. There is, in Revelation, a three-fold, distinct, time-based, dimension, to the coming, of the Lord.

[10 : 04] Let me see, if I can indicate it for you. Look back, to the very beginning, of Revelation, chapter 2, verse 16. Remember, in 1, chapter 1, we had heard, that he was going to, soon, have all these things, take place.

But in chapter 2, verse 16, to the church, of Pergamum, Jesus says, therefore, repent, if not, I will come to you, soon, and war against them, with the sword of my mouth.

This was the coming, of Christ, to a church, in its particular situation, in the first century. The same thing, appears, in chapter 3, and verse 11, to a different church, that of Philadelphia.

I am coming soon, he says, hold fast, what you have, so that no one, may seize your crown. In other words, in the book of Revelation, the coming of the Lord, is not always, limited, to the consummation.

Remember, chapter 1, it actually says, that he was the one, who was standing, in the midst, of the lamp stands. In other words, he was already, walking the aisles, of the congregation.

[11 : 21] He's present. Now. He comes. Now. How?

Through the strength, of his spirit. He rules, this auditorium, by word, and spirit. And for those, who are, repenting, and listening, and learning, he comes alongside, and comforts, and walks with.

And, he judges, and disciplines, and frustrates, our lives, when we are not, attentive, to his word.

Lord, we need, this vision, of Jesus, as we open, the year. We need, a vision, that understands, that when we, read this word, publicly, behold, I am coming soon.

We are hearing, the word, of, Christ. who would have, full sway, in our midst.

[12 : 46] And, who makes demands, present day demands, over our life, and our commitments. Not only, does, that idea, of, the coming, of Christ, relate, to, the first, century, even.

But, we saw, in chapter 5, through that, great vision, earlier this year, that this, Jesus, who had a word, for the churches, actually was, exercising, his rule, throughout, all of, human history.

Between, his first coming, and his second coming. And so, he goes, and he takes, the scroll, from God, and he begins, to unfold, in history, God's will, over the earth.

That he is coming. You can see that, clearly, in Revelation 6, when once the lamb, has opened, one of the seven seals, there is a voice, from the four living creatures, that say, like thunder, come, and, behold, a white horse, and his judgments, began to come.

When does Christ come? He comes, in the first century, over the church. disciplining his own, bringing people, to faith, walking alongside, those who are growing.

[14 : 11] He comes, not only, in the church, but he comes, over the world's events. All of the, unfolding, of God's, mysterious, eternal will, he's coming.

I'm not waiting, for it. It's present. And, the third dimension, of course, then, does relate, to what we consider, to be the consummation. Just take a look, at chapter 19, that other grand, vision, we looked at, in the opening, of the year.

Not only, the risen Christ, from Revelation 1, not only, the reigning Christ, from Revelation 5, but then, clearly, the back, end loaded, return, of Christ, when he appears, on the white horse.

And, notice again, our same word, verse 17, when the white horse, comes, there's a loud voice, that says, come, gather, for the great supper, of God.

The coming of Christ, is, is in the future, on the ultimate day. The coming of Christ, is throughout, all of human history, as he unfolds, the will of God, seated presently, at the right hand.

[15 : 18] The coming of Christ, is as intimate, as your aisle, your seat, your life, your behavior, even now. When one, considers that, then we fall, under the full vision, of what's really, happening.

He stands, even this morning, within earshot. Maybe you don't see him, but it's as though, he is around the corner, and he says, I'm coming soon.

That may mean, for you, that he's coming, into your life, right now, in this week, by his spirit, to alter your course, to turn you on, your heel, to woo you back, to his word.

It may mean, that you're to know, he is the one, who is, giving you confidence, as the world, appears to be careening. And it may be, his imminent, return, when he pulls the curtain down.

Therefore, our behavior matters. I was thinking, even as we were singing, this morning, of that opening song, come down, oh love divine.

[17 : 09] Listen to the words, you sang, you invited him, you invited him, this morning, you said, or played, oh let your fire burn, until our passions turn, in Jesus name, we yearn to praise.

Carve out, the stony part, of our, deceptive hearts, your mercy, then impart, by grace, Jesus, come down, oh comforter, come down, and capture us, for Jesus renown.

what a prayer, if it really rises up, beyond the, the beauty of, what that, almost, south side, bluesy sound, gave us.

but when that, sound emerges, in your soul, and, dances, over the lyrics, of your voice, and it's, meant by you, you are, inviting him home, the second, the second, voice, the second, element, of the fug, moves beyond, six and seven, and I won't spend, as long on it, but it's not merely, the words, or the voice, of the angel, it's now, the voice, of John, himself, verses, eight through, ten, or eleven, and then again, a return, to that standard line, behold, I am coming soon, verse twelve, John, will not, suffice, to end his book, merely, on the voice, of the angel, but now he says,

I, John, am the one, who heard, and saw, these things, and when I saw, the things, that I've just, told you about, I began, to worship, the mediating, angel, who actually, brought it to me, in other words, he's saying, whoa, you need to know, that I, the great apostle, can get it wrong, I can almost, get caught up, into the vision, of things, the experience, of things, I need an angel, to tell me, something today, and the angel, comes and says, no, John, what you have seen, ought to lead you, to praise God, alone, worship God, alone, I am, I am just a created being, like you are, and so John is saying, this is what I've learned, as I've unfolded, all the visions, before you, I've learned, that I am to worship God, what a great way, to begin the year, if we could affirm, the line of John, that while I've seen, amazing, astounding things, from the book of Revelation, the pivotal thing, that John took with him, was,

[20 : 18] I've got to worship God, God, and not only that, he said, verse 10, and don't seal up, the words of the prophecy, of this book, I don't, I don't, I don't need to, praise God, I've got to start, publishing, for God, I mean, John took his manuscript, to the publisher, and says, I'm supposed to get, this word out, Daniel, he got a vision, he had to seal it up, but my book, my words, my vision, needs a readership, and that's what John learned, praise God, and start publishing, I don't want to be trite, with the application, but certainly, we should all, have heard these visions, and the response, of our heart, ought to be, to correct ourselves, and only give our, our praise to God alone, I'm no longer, looking for, an angelic vision, to lead me,

I'm no longer, needing some, visionary experience, I'm not asking, for an ecstatic, moment, of the Holy Spirit's, guidance, I am to worship God, through faith in Christ, and I am to be, productive in my arena, for him, that's it, your whole course, of your year, is set, what are you doing, this year, well, I'm just taking, a line from John, you know, I'm praising God, and publishing, all I can, I've thought of this, myself, I don't tell you, much about myself, but, and that's fine, but you know, I haven't really, written a word, for publication, in almost two years, and that's after, about seven years, of writing, all the time, and this, this, this, this word, to John, like, get, this, word, of Jesus, out there, is, this falling on me, in healthy, and fresh ways, and then there's Jesus, that standard return, verse 12, behold,

I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one, for what he has done, I'm the alpha, the omega, the first, the last, the beginning, the end, I mean, where his first voice, entered, by way of promise, blessed are those, who keep, verse 7, this voice, enters by way, of recompense, in other words, the first, if his voice, is different, in verse 12, and 13, from what it is, in verse 7, it's only different, by way of emphasis, the first time, through, the emphasis, is Jesus saying, blessed are those, who have listened, to the words, of this, I have a promise, for you, God will be with you, don't, I hope you really, take in what you heard, but this one says, oh, let me change the image, I'm not just, a promise bearer, I'm actually, the one, who's going to, deliver the checks, in accordance, with what you really, did, that's the word, recompense, it's just wages,

Jesus is the one, you have to meet, to get paid, and he's going to, pay all of us, in accordance, with what we did, so, if we were on the clock, metaphorically speaking, and knew, knew in our heart, that he required, obedience, obedience of us, under his word, to uphold our vows, in faith, and we decide, to stop on the side, of the road, and grab a half hour, of coffee, instead of being, on our way, well he knows, he's got this ultimate, tracking device, he knows, where we are, at all times, he knows, whether we're on the move, or we're, off course, and he's going to come, and, pay, proper wages, we may come to him, and say, oh Lord, I was on the clock, till 6 p.m., you know that, they say, 6 p.m., well, hold on a sec, let me check my,

GPS device, because I got you back here, from 515 to 545, then you walked in the door, now I'm not paying you, for that half hour, or, I'm paying you, for that half hour, or, you'll pay, for that half hour, that's what he's saying, it's the picture, of an employer, not only a promise, for those who keep, but here's the one, who will deliver the substance, in accordance to that, which we have kept, the third, time then, the fugue, almost moves again, it's not the voice, of the angel, it's not the voice, of John, who actually then, has Jesus saying,

[25 : 50] I am coming soon, and rolling, rolling all the way, to verse 16, I Jesus, have sent my angel, I'm the one, that's doing this, but then all of a sudden, look at verse 17, the angel recedes, John in a sense recedes, and the line, that's laid down, is the spirit, and the bride say, come, and let the one, who hears say, come, and let the one, who is thirsty, come, and let the one, who desires, to take water, of life, without price, and then John himself, is involved, with the words, of the bride, until verse 20, the standard line returns, the one, who testifies, to these things, says surely, I am coming, soon, the spirit, and the bride, and John himself, are now testifying, coming, I find this fascinating, here's the climax, really of the whole book, and I hope, the message today, where Jesus, to this point, in the text, has been the one, saying,

I am coming, notice the change, it's the bride, and the spirit, that are saying, come, the question, of course, is, to whom, is their, address, meant to be, is this, are they facing, the voice, around the corner, are they saying, oh Jesus, I know you're near, come on, walk in the door, or, are they actually, facing you, and me, are they inviting, us to come, I think it's the latter, look at the way, verse 17, ends, it's an invitation, not to Jesus, but let the one, who is thirsty, come, let the one, who wants to take, the water, of life, without price, come, in other words, the spirit, of the living God, and the church, itself, looks to the world, around it, and to the congregant, within it, and says, have you heard, what we have heard, today,

I invite you, to come, I invite you, to come, to him, are you thirsty, come, come, to this Jesus, do you want, the water, of life, that will satisfy, in ways, that all of your, relationships here, are unable, thinking of the woman, at the well, then come, come to Jesus, he said, I got water, you don't, I got water, that will do something, for your soul, the scriptures, close, with the spirit, of the living God, inviting you, to come to Christ, in whatever state, you're in, whether you know, him already, or don't, whether you're, walking with him, or you wandered, off course, what a beautiful picture,

I've been thinking lately, you know, we say, we pray, we pray in Jesus name, and I've been just trying, to mentally, tell myself, Jesus, the one whom I love, and, long, to see, I'm trying to get that vision, of Christ, in me, I'm trying to get, a moment, as I begin the year, where I can genuinely say, I long, to see him, face to face, face, I long, to look him, in the eye, I long, to gaze, on the beauty, and the splendor, of my,

Lord, the lover, of my, soul, the provider, of my, needs, the savior, from my, sins, the one who will not, merely, stare me, down, pull me, by both, shoulders, square me, up, but the one who will, come, alongside, the one who will, say, wow, would you walk, with me, for a while, now, this is the invitation, invitation, invitation, Jesus says, verse 20, surely I am coming soon, then, then you have that, flourish, at the end, the double amen, one amen, is not enough, amen, come Lord Jesus, the grace of the Lord Jesus, be with you all, amen, what a way, for God, to close off, his voice, for us, the grace, the grace, the grace, of the Lord Jesus, be, with all, in a moment, we're going to sing,

[31 : 57] Lord, give us grace, that we, the meek, and lowly, may dwell, on high, with thee, give us grace, I think of the spiritual chorus, this morning, come, let us worship, come, let us worship, the Holy One, come, let us worship, the Lord, for he is, holy, holy, for he is, holy, worship, Christ the Lord, come, I mean, it's, just allows you, to sit there, the epilogue, of revelation, I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm coming, come, come, our heavenly father, we, look at the closing, prose, of the scriptures, as put forward, in this, apocalyptic, vision, of John, and it presents us, with a concluding, vision, of Jesus, who is, not so, far away, from us, that we cannot, hear his voice, not so, distant from us, that we cannot, desire his presence, help each one, here Lord, to hear these words, in the way, that they need, to be heard, for those, who are, downtrodden, and, almost feel, as if faith, is extinguishing, may you come, and minister, to them, for those, who have been, negligent, or resistant, may they, know, you're coming, and may our lives, change, suffice it, to say Lord, give us grace, in accordance, with our need, that we, the meek, and lowly, may dwell, on high, with thee, in Jesus name, amen.