

## Our Mission:

To share Christ with the world  
and grow disciples for Jesus



## Loving God and Loving Neighbor as Ourselves

### Background:

This is a passage that is often read at a Celebration of Life. It speaks of Christ's victory over the forces of this world and the creation of 'a new heaven and a new earth.' Here we hear the final proclamation of the incarnation, that God has made his dwelling among us. Once cast out in Genesis, we are once again reunited with God in the garden of the Tree of Life. Rather than bearing the sign of the beast, we have been marked by the cross of Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit now and forever.

### Theology Connection:

Lutherans speak of 'Salvation History.' This is a way of saying that all of history and the whole of the bible direct us toward one premise, this is what God is willing to do to bring us back into relationship with him. We see that God is willing to go to war for us, that God is willing to die for us, that ultimately God will not allow our sin and transgressions be the impediment to his desire to 'dwell with us.' Grace trumps all sin. Love wins! Alleluia!

### Application:

We don't have to live our lives waiting for heaven. We don't need to think of this life as simply the waiting room until God calls us home. We can begin to live the values of the Kingdom today. We can begin to live as eternal beings today. That is our witness, that God does dwell among us, and that living such a life is the far more abundant choice than any alternatives the world might offer us.

### **The Text: Revelations 21: 1-6, 22: 1-5**

**21** Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

<sup>4</sup>'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

<sup>5</sup>He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

<sup>6</sup>He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

**22** Then 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 <sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup>They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

<sup>5</sup>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.

## ADULT

We can remember getting to the end of a good book and wishing it would just continue. Wherever we are on life's journey, we can look back or forward and wonder if there is more. John wants us to live the more today by providing us an image of God's Kingdom. John wants us to live the promise of the new heaven and new earth now, in anticipation of all God has in store for us. John doesn't want us to wait, but to join in God's ways now. Does this sound like something you want now? What's keeping you from living it?

## YOUTH

Please read revelations 21:1-6 and 22:1-5

Revelation is full of God's promises. Although God does not fulfill all of our wishes, God fulfills all of God's promises. We are privileged to have hope in God. God's promise, I will "give you a future with hope" remains valid. The future has not been cancelled. Even if everything seems to go wrong in the world, we have God who will have the final word on earth and to me that is comforting.

Let us pray:

Dear God, Thank You for the food of the earth and the water from the well. Please bless us as we struggle and bless us when we don't struggle. Thank you for hope and your promise.  
In Jesus name we pray, amen

## CHILDREN'S

What do you think Heaven will be like? Will it be floating on clouds? Lots of singing? An unlimited amount of sweet treats? The Bible doesn't share all of the details about Heaven, but it does give us some clues about what Heaven might be like. The most important thing it tells us is that things will be beautiful and brand new, and that we will be with Jesus. The book of Revelation talks about what will happen at the end of the world that we know. God is the beginning and the end of all things. He promises that one day He will take all things and make them new again. We might not know what Heaven will look like, but we can be sure that God will take away all of our sadness and tears and will turn them into joy! It can be difficult to imagine or understand, but we can take hope in the fact that for those who love the Lord, life after death will be a wonderful blessing!

Think:

1. What did you learn from this story?
2. What is your favorite part of the story?
3. Draw a picture of what you think Heaven might be like!

Remember:

God is the "Alpha and Omega. The beginning and the end." He began everything and will end everything according to His will.

Pray:

Dear Lord, Thank You for giving us the promise of eternal life. We love You!  
Amen.