



May 28/29, 2022 – 7th Sunday after Easter

Preacher: Pastor Scott Oelhafen

Sermon Theme: Perform Under Peace, Not Pressure

Sermon Text: Revelation 22:12-17, 20

12 "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. 14 "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. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. 16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you^[a] this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." 17 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. 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

In the name of Him who is, who was, and who is to come, Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.

It's exciting to start working at a new job. But, it's also a little scary. As the new pastor, I know this from personal experience. But, it's not just me, is it? All of us here will experience this at one time or another. It's exciting because a different job means something new: new people to greet and new challenges to meet. But, it's also a little scary because you were familiar with the old job – what the boss expected of you, your former co-workers' quirks and personalities, and even how much you'd bring home at the end of the week. But, no matter how well the interview for the new job went, you still have all kinds of unanswered questions. Questions like: how hard will it be to get properly trained? How long will you keep that new job? And will it all be worth it? A lot is riding on how well you perform. And if you slip up, it may not be possible to go back to the old job. And so we often perform our jobs under a tremendous amount of pressure.

When Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, 40 days after that first Easter, a LOT was riding on the shoulders of the disciples. Jesus wasn't going to be there like he was the previous three years of his public ministry. He wasn't going to be there to hold their hands as they went out into the world preaching the Gospel to every man, woman, and child. He wasn't going to make them protected panda bears, as they faced intense rejection, persecution, and even death. There was no Plan B. This group of fragile followers were it. Stop and think of the consequences if they didn't do their job right of intentionally and willingly share the Gospel – the whole world, including you and me, that's your kids and mine, along with future generations would all go to hell forever. But, when we read the rest of Scripture, the disciples didn't fold under that pressure. And do you want to know why? It's simple. They performed under the peace of their risen LORD's forgiveness. His grace and mercy earned at Calvary and revealed at His empty tomb meant something to them. And it means everything to us. As Christian believers, we can now do whatever our Savior asks of us because we are under His peace. As we review the words of Revelation, chapter 22, we will learn to perform under peace, not pressure

because first of all because we know what Jesus expects of us. And we perform under peace, because Jesus gives us the courage to work faithfully.

The Book of Revelation is God's final word to us in Holy Scripture. It's the most fascinating book of the Bible and it's probably the most misunderstood. It was written by the disciple John, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to encourage God's people in the hardest of times. Using fantastic word pictures, colors, and numbers, God wanted His people, that's us to know, despite the troubles of this world, in the ultimate battle of good versus evil, God wins. And every believer who stands with God in the end wins too. These words couldn't come at a better time as we are faced with high gas prices, deadly school shootings, and war in Ukraine.

It would be frustrating if you began a new job and no one told you what you were supposed to do. You might start with tasks that don't really need to be done and end up neglecting more important work. That's why most of us work with bosses or supervisors who tell us what they expect of us. In a much greater way, Jesus, our gracious LORD tells us clearly what He expects of us in His Word so we have peace of mind.

So what kind of boss is Jesus? Listen to our sermon reading as Jesus tells us about Himself. He says: **¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.** The ALPHA is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and the OMEGA is the last letter of the alphabet. In other words, Jesus is telling us how long he's been in charge of the universe, from beginning to end, from A to Z, from ALPHA to OMEGA. In other words, he's always been around and He will always be around. So He knows our mission to share God's Word with others. He knows our job inside and out. He also knows how people respond to his prophets, plus He Himself has personal experience in preaching to people. Let me ask you: what kind of boss would you rather have – someone who only knows how to push a pencil and give orders, or someone who knows how to fix every machine in the plant? And so our Savior's timeless experience in fixing sinners inspires confidence in us.

Jesus tells us ahead of time what he expects of us. He says in verse 16: **¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you^[a] this testimony for the churches.** It's no secret what God expects of us. He expects us to share the truth of God's Word with others. He expects us not only to preach the Word, but to live according to what His Word says, to love God and to love one another, to be self-controlled, alert, and ready to forgive as we have been forgiven.

So what kind of performance review would you give yourself? I'm not that bad, am I? Deep down, my guilty conscience tells the truth. And yours does too. None of us do exactly what Jesus expects, do we? We don't give God the right living he requires. But, listen to how Jesus will judge our performance. He says: **¹² "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.** Jesus doesn't treat us as our sins deserves. He freely grants a reward of Grace, **a free gift of the water of life**, to all who trust in him. Jesus is more than our judge. He's our Savior from sin. All that will be on our record that day, is the right living of our Savior who died for our sins and was raised again to make us right with God. He gives this right living to us by faith alone. Let me explain it this way. Earlier this

week, I received a coupon from Luther Honda in Mankato to do some work on my car. The offer listed the make and model of my car along with the maintenance that's scheduled. Pretty slick, huh? And since I drive a Honda, it wouldn't make much sense for them to send me a coupon for maintenance for a Ford or Chrysler, would it?

In the same way, it wouldn't make much sense for Jesus to give eternal life to those who don't believe because they won't accept the offer. During their lifetimes, folks who don't see Jesus as their only Savior from sin instead rely on their personalities, their good deeds, and their money. They love the lie that God doesn't exist or that he doesn't get too uptight about their sinful lifestyles. And since they go through this life without God, God will give them what they want, an eternity separated from God in hell.

But, it's not too late. As Jesus says: ¹⁴ ***"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."*** When Jesus gives eternal life to us, we won't have to think twice about accepting the offer. Even though we've messed up on the job of living for Christ so many times, Jesus gives the opportunity now to wash away all our mistakes in the detergent of his blood. His holy precious blood is better than Tide laundry detergent. It gets the stain of sin out, that any other remedies leaves behind. And Jesus gives us access to a very exclusive place: heaven, described as ***going through the gates into the city to have the right to the tree of life***. Have you ever wondered what it's like to sit in one of those luxury boxes at Target Field or US Bank Stadium? I haven't been there either. I doubt they serve mac'n' cheese or franks and beans, do they? But, in heaven, we will dine on the best of food. We'll eat from the tree of life, meaning we'll get to be like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before the Fall into sin and live forever having a perfect day every single day. How great will that be?

And that promise of heaven gives us the courage to work hard in whatever station Christ has called us to be. Whether you are a called worker, leader, or person in the pew. Whether you are single or married, older or younger, parent, teen, or child. This promise of heaven, of perfection that is to soon to come inspires us work faithfully in whatever station God has called us to be. We work faithfully because Jesus is coming back on Judgement Day and He's coming soon. Three times in this final chapter of the Bible Jesus makes that point that He's coming soon, so no one misses out. Let's be faithful to God sharing his Word with others, because once our LORD returns in five hours or 5000 years, it will be too late.

I mean how would you feel if you owned a business, and one day when you came into work, all your employees were sleeping on the job? What choice would you have except to fire them on the spot? So also, when our LORD Jesus returns may he find us faithful, not wrapped up in our own busy schedules that we rarely think of him. My dear friends, we know in today's busy world, there's always something that gets left undone. But, if we put off sharing our faith with others, what if tomorrow never comes? Let's perform under peace, not pressure. May God's great love for us help us re-arrange our priorities, so that the most important Gospel work of all isn't left undone. Amen. Come LORD Jesus. Amen.