

“The Bright Morning Star”
Revelation 22:12-17
Advent 1

Revelation 22:12-17 (selected)

¹²“See, I am coming soon... ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

¹⁶“It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

¹⁷The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let everyone who hears say, “Come.” And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.

The Sermon

You’re out in the dark in the late small hours of the morning, long before dawn, bundled up; it’s cold. Your feet tramp on hard ground.

You can see your breath in the darkness of the world around you. Your ears and nose are cold, but your body temperature keeps you warm from within.

From inside, it would still look like the pitch black of midnight, but being outside, you’re able to see that the black has begun to soften, almost imperceptibly, to the darkest blue.

This is a journey you have to make.

For those who are fortunate enough to be able to afford the right clothes, the right walking shoes, the right coat, a scarf, a hat, the early morning walk can be a welcome, bracing challenge, a spiritual pilgrimage—maybe kind of fun, even.

But some are out there with much less. Some are out there with nothing. You may quietly give thanks to God that as long as you have to be out here, at least you have the means to enjoy it.

Suspended in the infinite vastness, the dark expanse of the cosmos as witnessed by one small and seemingly insignificant creature, like an ant on the edge of the Grand Canyon,

one bright light shines like a lighthouse in the distance, like a lantern hung by God for you to see your way home. “A light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

Eventually, we’ll all get back home to warmth and light and an easy chair and a full table and a warm bed. But, in each life, there is a journey in the dark before we get there.

As the book of Revelation rolls to its conclusion, we hear the voice echoing through the hallways of our souls and reverberating out into the world (or is it the other way around?):

“I am coming soon...

I am the Alpha and the Omega,
the first and the last,
the beginning and the end...

It is I, Jesus...
I am the root
and the descendant of David,
the bright morning star.”

Christmas is like a great many phenomena: it’s an occasion known and more or less understood by practically everyone, but it has its own meaning for each of us individually.

For some, it brings a sentimental warmth—childhood images of snow-covered streets or evergreen trees or wreaths and laurels; decorations that shine or shimmer: red, gold, silver, blue, green.

For some it brings mainly family memories. Sometimes, those bring warmth; sometimes, they bring a shiver. I knew a guy for whom the word “Christmas” automatically brought to mind an annual, inevitable shouting match that the whole family could see coming inexorably closer as the days ticked down toward the 25th.

We have all known agnostics or atheists who loved Christmas, and we've known Christians for whom their jadedness made it just another day, just another time of year.

I didn't care much for the postmodern aphorism "it is what it is" the first 600 times I heard it. But sometimes, that's about all there is to say.

For you, for me, "Christmas" is what it is. We each get ready for it in our own way, because we each have our own entirely personal sense of what it encompasses.

I encourage you during this time to mine a deeper relationship to God whenever, wherever, and in any way you can. Whether it's in the Bible passages or the Christmas shopping, I urge you to look for God everywhere.

Whether it's in dreamy sentimentality, or the rigid logistics of planning and executing your best possible holiday,

We can notice God, we can think about God, we can recognize where we may need (more effectively) to honor God, we can celebrate what God is doing within and around us in the commercial season of "preparing for Christmas."

Preparing for the imminent return of Christ is another matter.

He is the bright morning star.

He brings every tiny hope and mercy for your life, which is precious to God; he brings every vast promise and cosmic fulfillment of God and life and eternity.

We may assume he is coming back tomorrow, because he may be. It is time to prepare ourselves accordingly.

In prayer and self-examination, and service to those who are most vulnerable, in silence and in praise, in giving and in receiving, I invite you into the season of Advent to prepare for the coming of Christ into the world.

Keith Grogg
Montreat Presbyterian Church
Montreat, NC
November 29, 2015