

**Revelation 1:7**

Seventh Sunday of Easter (Series C)

**Lessons for the Day: Acts 1:12-26; Revelation 22:1-6, 12-20; John 17:20-26****Our Exalted Lord: He's Coming Back!**

June 2, 2019

***“Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.”***

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

Wait until your father gets home! Over the centuries, I am sure that there have been more than a few children who have heard that word of warning. Of course, being the sainted child that I was, I never heard that word of admonition—and if you believe that, you are going to be very surprised when the lightning strikes the pulpit today. I imagine that most children have been reminded, in one way or another, that there is a consequence to certain actions and attitudes, and that sooner or later there is going to be a time of judgement, a time of reckoning, when we will have to give answer for the things we have done, and face the consequences of our deeds.

My dear Baptist grandmother used to stop us when we were getting into mischief and ask, “Would you want Jesus to catch you doing that if He were to come back right now?” She was making it clear that there was a time of reckoning, and you don’t want to be on the wrong side of righteousness when that day comes.

Our confession of faith in the Apostles’ Creed declares the Biblical truth that Jesus is coming again, and that He is also coming as judge. Yes, there is a day of reckoning that God has planned for our world. In our Epistle lesson today, Jesus tells His Church: ***“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.”*** (Revelation 22:12, ESV) During His earthly ministry, Jesus told His disciples: ***“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”*** (Matthew 25:31–32, ESV) Our Lord is coming back. That is good news for us, but we also need to know that He comes to judge all mankind for the things they have done in this life, whether good or bad. That is why our text says: ***all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.*** His coming is the best of times. For some, it is also the worst of times, for it is the day when He will judge the living and the dead.

The writer of the book of Hebrews is led by the Holy Spirit to tell us: ***“The Lord will judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*** (Hebrews 10:30–31, ESV) Now, no one wants to hear that. We want to think of God as a warm, cuddly, caring grandfather, who just wants to love His people, no matter what they have done. At the very least, Jesus loves me, this I know, so we don’t think of judgement. Hey, didn’t even Jesus say: ***“Judge not, that you be not judged.”*** (Matthew 7:1, ESV)? That has led many people to conclude today that God isn’t about judging. In surveys, over 90% of people believe that they will go to heaven. After all, they reason, God is love. God is a good God. He can’t want to punish anyone. Besides, what have we done that is all that bad?

“What have you done?”, the judge asks. Why, just look at what you have done!! You are using this thing called the internet to distribute pornography—and it is accessible to anyone, even children! You are gambling away the resources I have entrusted to you—at casinos, and even through the lottery tickets you think are so innocent. Your attitudes towards my creation of male and female has become so misguided that you consider as normal—even healthy—something that causes me pain. You argue that people should be free to terminate, through abortion, lives that I have created. For all this, and countless other sins, I hold you accountable. I will judge you for your actions”, declares the Lord.

But we sit back and think, “Boy, are we ever lucky, because we don’t do any of those kinds of things. We aren’t like that music teacher who sexually preyed on young children, and who deserves the jail sentence he just received. We don’t support the porn industry. We haven’t swindled anyone out of their life savings. Oh, sure, we have told the odd lie here and there. Maybe we have looked at another man or another woman, and fantasized about them. It’s true that we are angry at that co-worker, but we really do try to get along with most people. We only ignore our teachers or our parents because they just don’t understand what it is to be a kid today.”

Again God roars back and says, “WHAT??!! Don’t you understand that every sin is damning, that even the small things are worthy of my judgment? I call you to be holy, as I am holy. But you haven’t done it. In fact, you aren’t even as good as you

think you are. There is more evil, more sin, more disobedience in you than you would ever like to admit. And I will hold you accountable. I will judge you for your sin and your unbelief, you wicked and perverse people.”

Is that all that it means that Jesus is coming again to judge the living and the dead? If it were, this wouldn't be a very comforting teaching for us. The prophet Malachi prophesied regarding the coming of the Messiah, and asks: **“But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?”** Yet Malachi comforts us by giving us the answer: **“For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.”** (Malachi 3:2, ESV) Malachi assures us that the Saviour comes to refine His people; to get rid of the impurities in us. He comes to wash us clean, as He covers us with His holiness and takes our place upon the cross. This is why we don't fear the coming of Christ; we eagerly, joyfully await it! We await Him, who has already taken away our sin through His death and who promises us life with Him through His resurrection from the dead.

Part of the problem is that we don't always understand what it means to judge. I once had to go to court as a witness in a case. When the summons came, my children were very concerned that I was in trouble. In their minds, if you had to go to court, it meant you had done something wrong. But we sometimes forget, especially in a world where our justice system often fails to work as it should, that courts can also bring justice to us. In at least six psalms, God's people have prayed as David did: **“Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.”** (Psalm 26:1, ESV) There are times when it seems that everything is so confused, so topsy-turvy. If Jesus died and rose to deliver us, why does it seem so hard to see His kingdom that will never end? Why are God's people suffering and dying, while the unbelievers seem to be thriving, even growing in power and influence? Jeremiah asked it for all of us: **“Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?”** (Jeremiah 12:1, ESV) We hear of another mass shooting; of another case of child abuse; another scandal. There is another bombing targeting Christians. When will it all end?

It is right in that plea that of “how long, O Lord”, that the promise of the creed and of our text comes together. Christ shall come to judge the living and the dead. He will come to reveal to the world—and to us, His dear children—the perfect righteousness and judgement of Almighty God. He will reveal everything that people have done or have not done in this world. He will set everything right. He will vindicate His people.

In our Gospel lesson today, we hear Jesus pray: **“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”** (John 17:24, ESV) My dear friends, don't miss this important truth. You and I have done nothing worthy of God's mercy, and yet He is merciful. He has saved us so that we will not perish in the judgement, but be with Him in His glorious kingdom. He has already dealt with the judgement we would face. In those beloved words of the *gospel in a nutshell*, Jesus tells us: **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”** (John 3:16–18, ESV) This is why you and I look forward to His appearing. Yes, the day is drawing ever nearer to the day when the words of our text will be fulfilled: **Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.** Those who do not believe: who love the world, but despise the Lord who created the world; those who see His truth as a lie, and exchange it for the lies of men, they are the ones who will weep. God will hold them accountable. But those who trust in the Saviour; those who don't stand on their own goodness, but turn to Him who faced our judgement and paid the price for our judgement in His death and in His resurrection, will look with joy to the day when their Saviour and Redeemer will come as judge.

Our text comes from the opening verses of Revelation, and the promise that Jesus is coming in power and glory. Our Epistle lesson comes from the last verses of the Bible, and three times in that lesson Jesus says: **“Behold, I am coming soon.”** (Revelation 22:12, ESV) In fact, the Scriptures end with a promise and a prayer: **“He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”** (Revelation 22:20, ESV) That is our prayer, too. Come, Lord Jesus. We know you are coming again as you promised. Come as judge, so that we may be vindicated as your trusting people, and have the life that is ours, for you died for us and rose for us and rule for us. Amen.