

May 1, 2016  
Revelation 21:9-14; 21-27

Easter 6C  
Living with the End in Mind

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and with our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Are you one of those people that like to know the end before you watch a movie or read a book? Perhaps you have watched a movie or even a TV series or a sporting event knowing that in the end, the outcome, would be okay. At times this gives you a sense of hope as you are watching through the bad and almost impossible story line. This happens quite frequently I assume with the invention of DVR, the internet, and Social Media. Outcomes are given before you have a chance to sit in front of the TV to take it in or even get to the theatre to watch that movie.

Back when the Star Wars movie came out there were internet spoilers of the movie and it seemed that they were out even before opening night.

Or Perhaps you like to read the last chapter of a book before you start reading the beginning. You know the ending so you can enjoy the plot of the story. You have the ending in mind throughout the story.

Or perhaps you remember Paul Harvey and his famous line “And now you know the rest of the story.”

Today in the reading from the Revelation to St. John, God gives us a real glimpse of the end, the final outcome, the rest of the story—for us, for the church, for God’s enemies, for his entire creation—to help us, comfort us, and strengthen us as we are still going through and living out the details of the story. We get to read the final chapter, the back of the book, and we win! God wins the battle, and we, the church, share that victory.

This picture that God gives to us is a picture of a wedding, but the description isn’t exactly like the weddings of today or even the weddings at the end of the Disney Princess movies. Perhaps you are getting to know those wedding stories quite well. In Revelation, the church triumphant, is described as the bride, the wife of the Lamb. In Ephesians 5 St. Paul describes the love of Jesus for His bride, the church...you: <sup>25</sup> *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* <sup>26</sup> *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* <sup>27</sup> *so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*<sup>1</sup> The picture Revelation and Paul to the Ephesians brings to mind is the picture of a royal wedding. A wedding fit for a King.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Eph 5:25–27). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Indeed it is! But, Revelation 21 describes a royal city—Jerusalem—Coming down out of heaven from God. We heard the beginning last week. Now we hear the full beauty of this royal city. It's beautiful, brilliant and magnificent. This picture that we get in Revelation is a picture of perfection. It's described as a perfect cube. Some of the images we receive are the 12 gates that are always open. These represent the Old Testament people of God. The twelve precious stones that are the foundation represent the New Testament people of God. This is us. We live in the New Testament time. We are part of this story. A perfect cube—a glorious city. A city that has no physical temple, for God and the Lamb are its temple—who is the focus and attention of all worship. It has no sun or moon for the Lamb is its lamp and the glory and splendor of God shine brightly. And it's always day, there is no night, darkness does not exist in the new Jerusalem.

This is a glimpse of the rest of the story. This is a glimpse of the end. Revelation is packed with metaphors and images that stretch our human minds. For the glory and wonder of eternity with Jesus is beyond what words can even describe and beyond what our minds can comprehend on this fallen earth. But we get a glimpse and it's a glimpse beyond our wildest imagination. It's a glimpse of perfection. It's a glimpse that offers hope even in the midst of trouble, hardship, and pain.

This took new meaning for me this past week as I've had time to process what happened in my hometown of Antigo. It showed once again that we aren't at the end, but it's coming close. Pain and suffering are very real in the church militant. Pain and suffering are very real on this side of heaven. Last Sunday when I saw the news of what happened on the sidewalk that I walked into High School and where I walked out of after prom many years ago, caused me to go numb for a while. The thought of "it can never happen here" is gone, because it did happen, and it can happen anywhere at any given time.

Perhaps you too have felt pain and suffering at an event that you have personal connections to...perhaps it was even 9/11 or Hurricane Katrina or the shooting at Columbine or other tragedies.

Even with all that pain, as we still live in the Church Militant, we are still tempted and sometimes we fall. Sometimes...many times we do sin. And when we sin it causes pain and suffering for ourselves and others. Perhaps the pain doesn't even come from tragedy and sin...perhaps it comes from just living with the end in mind. The parenting decisions, the disappointments you face that happen beyond your control. Maybe it's the fact that you are shunned for your faith. No matter what causes you pain, you know the end of the story. You know what is coming. It's much like knowing the end of the movie or having the read the end of the book...you know that even in the tense moments in the plot of the story, there's going to be a happy ending.

Sometimes when the pain and sufferings happen, discouragement comes, but you and I we should never give up. For you and I, we are living with the end mind. The end is the very fact that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Your names are written in the Lamb's

book of life. These names are not written with ink...they are written with blood, the blood of the Lamb that was shed on the cross when He died for you. You have the assurance that you are his, having been marked with the cross. He put his name on you in baptism and belong to him. You hear those words when a person is baptized, "Receive the sign of the Holy Cross both upon your forehead and your heart to mark you as one redeemed by Christ the Crucified." By faith in Christ, you cling to the promises. This glimpse of the end gives us hope and encouragement when times are tough, when we get discouraged, and when things look hopeless.

Knowing the rest of the story provides you with hope of what is to come.

Knowing the rest of the story helps you live with the end in mind. How do you live with the end in mind, knowing that your names are written in the Lamb's book of life? Let's start sharing with others the end of the story, the fact that they too can receive this great gospel gift. Let's start pointing others that they too can be a part of this new Jerusalem, this heavenly bride, because they too were bought with the Lamb's blood of life.

Most Disney princess movies end with "and they lived happily ever after." After the prince saves the princess in distress, they celebrate the royal wedding and live happily ever after. There are times that I wonder how happy everyone would be as they faced the realities of life...if they lived each day remembering the rest of the story, the end, the final outcome.

Even though, there are conflicts to resolved, children to raise, disappointments to face, and the effects that sin has on our lives as we live in a fallen world.

But this glimpse that you and I receive today, is the glimpse of the bride of Christ, and it assures us that we will live happily ever after, for we will have eternity to celebrate this royal wedding that you and I are part of

You and I will have the opportunity to live in the end of the story for eternity. But even now, you have the opportunity to live with the end in mind. How you live your life is of great importance and it impacts the life of the church. Live your life fully to the king as this glimpse of your future gives you hope and encouragement now.

In Jesus name, the one who is at work within us, the author and perfecter of our faith. Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus, your Lord and Savior, the Risen King who is the Lamb of God that was slain and is now alive. Amen.*