

Summer Serve: His Kids needs you! We have lots of space available for you to serve our kids and families at NSAC this summer.

- Serving is easy the lessons and supplies will be prepared for you all you need to do is show up with open hands and an open heart.
- Sign up via the sheet in the bulletin (return to Info desk), online or on the BIG sheets on the wall downstairs in the His Kids area.
- It's lots of fun!

illus: With the World Cup kicking off this past week, I'm one of a few billion people on the planet who are enjoying football brilliance. Who will emerge as shining stars? Will it be familiar names like Messi and Ronaldo? Salah or Lewandowski? Maybe this will be Harry Kane's year? Or will some unknown player step up on the world's stage? Perhaps like me, you recently filled out a World Cup bracket in an attempt to predict the winners and losers. I've got France and Germany meeting in the final, with Germany winning the World Cup for a second straight time.

I've predicted Germany as the champions, not primarily because I think they can win—though I do believe they have the best team—Germany is my choice because my ethnic heritage is German. While every country tends to be known by its stereotypes, some of these stereotypes have a basis in reality. Canadians are known for being nice, while the English are known for being reserved, dignified, proper. What are Germans are known for? When it comes to football, engineering, and language, Germans are known for their precision.

When you hear the phrase “German engineering,” what comes to mind? I tend to think of companies like BMW, Mercedes, and

Porsche; for me the phrase evokes images of finely tuned vehicles hurtling down the Autobahn at ridiculous speeds.

In German, there is a word for everything. The German language allows for single words to be compounded, making longer words, which express a precise, and often complex, idea. I don't speak German, I wish I could, but I found the longest word in the German language and I've got it up on the screen behind me—*Kraftfahrzeughaftpflichtversicherung*. For those of you that are counting, this word contains 36 letters! We need four words in English to translate this single German word; it means “liability insurance for vehicles.”

I don't know that I can blame it on my German heritage, but I really like precision. Think about the beauty of a finely made watch, or a well-designed car, or a building with exquisite lines. Above all other arenas, I am drawn to precision when it comes to the use of words. I am drawn to language that is precise, saying what needs to be said so as to avoid misunderstanding and confusion.

But when it comes to human language, precision is not always possible. Take the word “soon” for example. If you look the word up in a Thesaurus, you will find all kinds of companion words:

- shortly, before long, in a little while;
- in a minute, in no time, before you know it.

Parents use this word a lot. *When are we going to leave? Soon. When are we going to get there? Soon. When is this going to be over? Soon.*

I'm not sure I like the word. It's too imprecise. I want to know when!

“**Soon**” means “imminent but not immediate.” “**Soon**” means I can’t predict, or control, the timing. “**Soon**” means that I need to be ready—at *any* moment—and more often than not, I’d rather do my own thing and get ready at the *last* moment.

As we come to the end of the Book of Revelation this morning, the word “**soon**” is found in the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ; three times He says, “*I am coming soon.*”¹ It’s an imprecise word. Jesus could return at any moment but we want to know—*when?* The Church has been waiting for nearly 2000 years. *What does it mean for us to be ready for His return?*

If you have a Bible with you, paper or electronic, I want to encourage you to turn with me to Revelation 22:6-21. The last two weeks, Pastor Paul and I have been preaching on John vision of a new heaven and a new earth. John describes Heaven in terms of a place (a Holy City), in terms of a marriage (Jesus is the Groom and the Church as His Bride), and in terms of God’s presence.

The day is coming when human sorrow will be banished forever. The life to come will be a life without pain, loss, guilt, or shame; it will be a life without disappointment, anger, betrayal, or rejection. When we hear these words, anticipation begins to rise and we want to know *when?* The answer Jesus gives is “*Soon.*” Please follow along as I read.

John writes, “**6** *The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.”* **7** *“Look, I*

am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.”

8 *I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. **9** But he said to me, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!”*

10 *Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, because the time is near. **11** Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy.”*

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. **18** I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds*

¹ Revelation 22:7, 12, 20.

anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.

20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.

Our text can be organized into three sections—vs. 6-11, vs. 12-16, and vs. 17-21—and common to each of the sections is Jesus’ promise, “*I am coming soon.*” Let’s take a look at each section, beginning with vs. 6-11.

1. Vs. 6-11, We know are ready for His return when worship and discipleship mark our lives.

Worship: This final text in *Revelation* is reminiscent of how the book began. John was given a revelation from Jesus, about Jesus. Remember, John had been one of the 12 disciples. He had been a part of the inner circle that went where Jesus went, heard what Jesus said, and saw what Jesus did—John knew Jesus as well as anyone. But Revelation 1 tells us that when John saw of Jesus—risen, ascended, glorified—he was overcome by a weight of glory and he fell at Jesus’ feet as though dead.²

Once again, here at the end of *Revelation*, John falls facedown. In fact, he’s so overwhelmed that he mistakenly bows before an angel and the angel quickly redirects his praise—*Worship God!* And surely

this is the most important and all-encompassing directive in life—*Worship God!* If we get this right, everything else falls into place; if we get this wrong, everything else falls apart.

While Revelation 4 and 5 are located near the beginning of the book, it provides us with the central vision of God—seated on the throne, in the place of glory, honour, and power. ***But I wonder, is this the central vision of our lives? God may be seated on the throne but have we failed to take notice?***

The greatest threat to worship is me, you, ourselves. In this fallen world, we have made ourselves—our desires—the measure of all things. The New Testament regularly uses the word “flesh” to describe humanity in its opposition to God. When we live according to the flesh, instead of being directed by the Holy Spirit, we live a life centred around Me, Myself, and I.

illus: When Pastor Paul worked as a barista in Starbucks he had to handle personalized drink orders that sounded something like this: *I’d like a Half Caff, Triple Venti, 2 pump sugar-free-vanilla, Soy, Extra Hot, No foam, With whip, Light Caramel Drizzle, Latte.* Our coffee orders are a symptom of a deeper reality; we expect all of life to be personalized to our preferences. Starbucks has not created a monster, but they are feeding the beast of self that will never be satisfied.

The primary reason we do not bow before God’s throne is because more often than not, we have enthroned ourselves. If we want to

² Revelation 1:17.

recover worship, we needed a renewed vision of God. *Revelation* reminds us that God is the Creator of heaven and earth.

Revelation 1 describes Jesus as having eyes that blaze like fire. This image is meant to convey the truth that Jesus sees everything; He sees things as they are, not as they appear to be. **Jesus sees you**—your hopes and dreams, what you have gained and lost, your joys and your woundedness. **Jesus knows you**—He knows what makes you tick, what you're afraid of, what you're pursuing. And **Jesus loves you**—the real you—the person you are when nobody else is looking, the person that nobody else sees.

Revelation 5 describes Jesus by way of two contrasting images: He is both Lion and Lamb. Like a lion, Jesus is powerful and unafraid; like a lamb, Jesus has embraced our weakness and frailty. Revelation 5:9 describes heaven breaking out in worship of the Lamb. They sang a new song because something new, something never before imagined had taken place. God the Son stepped into our world. He became human without ceasing to be God. Heaven's Champion suffered and died on the cross—a Lamb slain for the sins of the world. But the Lamb is a Lion! He broke the power of sin by taking our sin upon Himself. He triumphed over death by submitting to death, once for all.

To worship is to recognize the true value of something and to ascribe worth. What is God worth? His value is beyond estimation—*O for a thousand tongues to sing my Great Redeemer's praise!* Worship grounds us in God's reality, it brings us back to centre, it reminds us

who we are living for. If you want to be ready for Jesus' return, *worship God*, and, and embrace the path of discipleship.

Discipleship: In truth, discipleship—following Jesus, becoming like Jesus—is a subcategory of worship, but I mention it because of what is written in vs. 7. "*Blessed is the one who **keeps** the words of the prophecy written in this scroll*".

The verb "keep" is the crucial word. It can mean either "to preserve," or, "to live in obedience to," but given the context of *Revelation*, the second meaning wins the day.³ We live in readiness for His return by aligning our lives to His life; practically speaking, we are never more ready than when we live in obedience to His word.

Jesus once said, "*everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.*"⁴

What kind of foundation are you building your life on? Is it solid like rock, or shifting like sand? Revelation 14:4 describes the true disciple as one who follows the Lamb wherever He goes.

³ Gordon Fee, *Revelation*, 309.

⁴ Matthew 7:24-27

Vs. 6-11 reminds us that we are ready for His return if worship and discipleship mark our lives. In the next section, vs. 12-16, Jesus ascribes to Himself four different titles. These titles are meant to remind us who Jesus is, and why He's worth following.

2. We live in readiness for His return by remembering who Jesus is and responding accordingly.

(a) In vs. 12 Jesus describes Himself as **the One who rewards**. *“My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.”*

We need to remember the audience who first heard these words. What John saw and heard was written down in the form of a letter and sent to seven churches, located in seven different cities. At the time, the Roman Empire was beginning to crack down on the Church and persecution was ramping up. Christians were losing their businesses, being forced out of their homes, and some had been imprisoned.

Those who were imprisoned were put to the question: *“If you want to go free, all it takes is three little words—Caesar is Lord. If you turn from the worship of Jesus, you can have your old life back—your home, your business, your family. Do you want to save your life, or lose it?”* Under these circumstances, you can see why Jesus refers to Himself as the One who rewards.

From the moment we are born, fear is our travelling companion. We feel fear because we all have something to lose: our relationships, our

reputation, our job, our dreams, our health. Fear narrows our vision until all that we see is the possibility of pain and loss. Isn't this why so many of us hold back from going all-in with Jesus? We have believed the lie that we have more to lose than we have to gain. Vs. 14 describes the reward that Jesus refers to: *“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.”* This is a reference to the life that awaits us when Jesus returns.

If we have Christ, we have everything that matters: everlasting life, unconditional love, forgiveness, meaning, purpose—these things can never be taken from us. In our pursuit of Jesus, we might temporarily experience pain and loss, but when we see Him face to face, we will not regret any sacrifice we have made; I suspect, we will wish we had sacrificed more.

(b) The second title can be found in vs. 13: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, **the Beginning and the End.**”* This is not the first time Jesus has been referred to in this way⁵.

Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last—God had the first word in creation and He will have the last word when all things are made new. Jesus then describes Himself as the “beginning and the end”. In one sense, Jesus uses another phrase to say the same thing, but in another sense, the meaning has exponentially expanded.

The Greek word for “beginning” is *arche*; this forms the basis for the English word *archetype*. Jesus is more than the prototype (or test

⁵ Revelation 1:17; 21:6.

model), He is the *archetype*: the final, perfect, example to which all of heaven and earth looks. Whether people know it or not, everything in the universe has been made through Jesus and for Jesus—His life provides the pattern for all of life. But He’s not just the beginning (the *archetype*), He’s also the end (the *telos*). The word *telos* means the ultimate aim, goal, and purpose of life. Jesus is the *telos*, He’s the reason we exist, He’s our ultimate aim, the purpose for all of life.

(c+d) The third and fourth title come in quick succession; in vs. 16 Jesus describes Himself as “*the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.*”

The third title is taken from Isaiah 11; the prophet Isaiah envisions the day when the Messiah will come in wisdom, righteousness, and power. On that day, the enemies of God’s people will be defeated and the peace of God will cover the whole earth.

The fourth title, *the Bright Morning Star*, ends up being the final thing that Jesus says about Himself. Why this? Why now? One author writes, “The morning star often appears between two and three at night, when the darkness is complete, and the faintest sign of morning is not yet visible... Yet when you see the morning star, you know the night has been defeated. For the morning star pulls the morning in behind it, just as certainly as Jesus pulls the kingdom in behind him.”⁶

The day is coming when all human sorrow will be banished forever. The life to come will be a life without pain, loss, guilt, or shame; it

will be a life without disappointment, anger, betrayal, or rejection. In the life to come there will be no need to run, hide, or pretend. We won’t disappoint others and others won’t disappoint us; we won’t hurt others and others won’t hurt us. Think about what it will be like...the complete and total absence of fear, pain, and death.

The morning is not yet visible, but we see Jesus—our Bright Morning Star—and He will make everything new!

3. Vs. 6-11 reminds us that we are ready for His return if worship and discipleship mark our lives. Vs. 12-16 contains four titles that remind us who Jesus is, and why He’s worth following. The final section, **vs. 17-21 call us to live with anticipation, and share our hope with the world, because Jesus is coming soon.**

Vs. 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.*”

The Holy Spirit leads the Church in holy expectation—come Jesus, take your rightful place as Lord and King, come with your salvation, come with your love, and bring healing to the brokenness of this world and our lives.

Christ’s return is inevitable; the King will return and usher in His Kingdom. He will not allow pain, loss, and sorrow to win the day. Because God is righteous, He will put all wrongs to right. In vs. 20 Jesus says, “*Yes, I am coming soon,*” and we want to know *when?*

⁶ Bob Goudzwaard, *Idols of Our Time*, 98-99; as quoted by Darrell Johnson, *Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through The Book Of Revelation*, 386.

When will all this mess we are living with be over? Why must we still wait? Richard Bauckham writes, “the logic of God’s delay is that of God’s patience and grace. He gives people time to repent.”⁷

If you have heard and received Christ’s invitation to join God’s family, you have joined the chorus of those who anticipate His return. But we do not simply wait and pray, “*Come Lord Jesus,*” we join in God’s mission. We seek out those who are thirsty and we say, “*Come to Jesus.*” We come alongside those who know they have nothing to offer God, and we say, “*Come to Jesus.*” We speak to the proud, the angry, the greedy, and we say, “*Come to Jesus.*”

Philemon 1:6 says, “*I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.*” We anticipate His return and so we share our faith, but in sharing our faith we are reminded of every good thing we have in Christ and we anticipate His return all the more. It’s a wonderful cycle.

Conclusion: As I conclude this morning, I want to return to the question I led with: *Are you ready for His return?* Throughout history there have been no shortage of people who have tried to predict when He will return, but so far, every last prediction has been wrong. The good news is that if the predictions keep coming, one day, someone will be right.

Revelation wasn’t written to help us predict; it was written to help us see ourselves and the world from God’s perspective. *When will Jesus return?* The answer He gives us is “**soon.**” “**Soon**” is not a precise

word, but it is an action word. “**Soon**” keeps us watching, anticipating, worshiping, following, remembering, praying, and witnessing. We don’t know what the future holds but we know the One who holds the future, and so we pray: *Even so, Come Lord Jesus.*

Prayer

Worship

Benediction

⁷ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology Of The Book Of Revelation*, 158.