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St Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> St. SW  
Austin, MN, 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels  
sermon preached on-  
May 5, 2013  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Acts 14:8-18; John 14:23-29  
Hymns: 245; 477; 613; 377:10

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high  
mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem,  
descending out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of  
God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper  
stone, clear as crystal. 12 Also she had a great and high wall  
with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names  
written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the  
children of Israel: 13 three gates on the east, three gates on the  
north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on  
them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ...

22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the  
Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of  
the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The  
Lamb is its light. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified and Risen Savior, dear fellow Redeemed

INTRO: (Remembering the Victory while enduring the struggles of this earthly pilgrimage, looking for another home.)

Especially during the six Sundays of Easter we observe the victory which Jesus secured in His resurrection. That victory was what the Apostles celebrated daily, even as they faced and endured much persecution. As the children of God see the forces of evil in the world, sometimes it is difficult to comprehend the victory as being real, as being already in place, already in force. For Jewish Christians there was a great deal of pressure put upon them to turn away from their faith in Jesus as their Crucified and Risen Savior and to return to observing the Mosaic law as one's source of righteousness and life. Often, these Jewish Christians were estranged from their families, and many even lost their homes or businesses. They were forced to leave Jerusalem and even Judea, and start their lives over again in some strange and distant city. All this inconvenience would go away if they would only renounce their faith in Jesus.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews they were encouraged to remember that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob lived according to faith. They wandered over the promised land never owning that which was promised, but they went on in faith, looking for another homeland, a heavenly homeland (Hebrews 11:13-16). Even though they lived many centuries before Jesus' death and resurrection, by faith they knew the victory that was theirs in Christ.

So also late in the Apostle John's life there was a time of severe persecution for Christians throughout the Roman Empire. The forces of evil appeared so strong, and the Christians suffered the cruelty of the unbelieving world. It was a time of painful sacrifice, and the victory which Jesus had won in His resurrection seemed distant, perhaps even unreal. In response to this persecution Jesus appeared to the Apostle John and presented this Revelation proclaiming once more the Victory that is ours in Christ Jesus. As one reads through this book that seems so hard to understand it is important to remember that this

is the key to the entire book: As scary or as powerful and intimidating as they may appear Christ has gotten us the victory over all the forces of evil. This victory remains just as real for us now and it is our destiny for all eternity. This earth with all its vanity and sin will all pass away. There is another home which Jesus has gone to prepare for us.

**TLH 660: 1** “I’m but a stranger here, Heav’n is my home; Earth is a desert drear, Heav’n is my home; Danger and sorrow stand Round me on every hand; Heav’n is my father-land Heav’n is my home.”

So let us consider the wonders of -

**Theme: The Heavenly Home Christ Has Prepared for Us.**

The vision which John received reveals for us

**I. Its Glory -- The very Glory of God!**

**Revelation 21:10-11** And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

This is the city which Jesus has established by His holy life, His innocent sufferings and death, and His glorious resurrection! It is like none other. It is the great city, the holy and heavenly Jerusalem! In the vision John saw it as if it were descending from heaven, and it was a glorious sight to behold! The glory of this heavenly Jerusalem was the glory of God. The Spirit conveys the picture as that of a glistening gemstone sparkling in the light of the glory of God. John’s words conveyed to his readers, not only of that day long ago, but for us also, that we are not waiting in vain, nor are we sacrificing the pleasures of this life, or forsaking the carnal pleasures of this sinful world for nothing. The heavenly home is real, and it is glorious, and the Lord shall present this wonder to all the earth.

At the end of our text John speaks more of the glory of this heavenly Jerusalem. We read in verses 22 and 23:

**Revelation 21:22-23** But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

This is not only about the glory of the Lord being so brilliant that there won't be any need for the sun to shine; it is also about the Lord's presence among His people in that heavenly world. There won't be a need for a temple where one would come to seek out the Lord's grace and love, and find that communion with the Lord for which our hearts yearn. The Lord will be with us always. His presence won't be limited to that omnipresence which is a part of this earthly existence, a presence of which we have little continual awareness. It will be a glorious communication of His love with His people. It will be an amazing interchange of praise and grace that will bring wonder to each day of our eternal lives. Such is the glory that awaits us in the home which Christ has prepared for us, to which He shall call and gather us before Him.

In this vision John saw the true dimensions of the holy city in -

## **II. Its Walls and Gates -- The Complete Church**

**Revelation 21:12-13** Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

This is a complete picture. There is nothing missing from in this presentation of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Perhaps one might think it is a bit unusual for a city with such high walls to have so many gates. Of course the vision is not a literal presentation of heaven, but a picture of exactly what it is that Jesus has built with His death and resurrection. The completed walls with the twelve gates symbolize the Church. The number twelve is used here and throughout Revelation to represent the Church, the gathering of ALL believers. That is exactly what the Lord is accomplishing here on earth while this time of grace for the world continues. He is calling and gathering His chosen and

elect to Himself as His people. In the end when all shall be revealed the Holy City, the heavenly Jerusalem shall be absolutely complete. The number of the saved will be fulfilled!

The gates face all four directions. The gathering of God's people shall not be from only one tribe, or nation, or one sector of the planet. The Lord has sent forth His messengers to the far reaches of the earth, to every continent, to every inhabited land. He calls sinners to repentance that His city may be complete, that His spiritual Israel made be made up of every kind of people on the earth.

In the face of the opposition and the persecution which the early Church faced this was an important and encouraging message. The powers of this world were doing their utmost to squelch the growth of Christianity, to stop the spread of the gospel. The devil was beguiling theologians with their own intellect and what they perceived to be superior wisdom. The outcome was a great deal of corrupt teaching that was being spread throughout the congregations in the early church. It caused dissensions and sects to arise which Satan sought to use to suppress the truth. All this was indeed discouraging for the young Church, especially among the Gentile Christians.

For God to reveal the glory and majesty and completeness of His Church was not merely exhilarating for them, but a reassurance that the world would not prevail. The victory of our Risen Lord was secure and in place.

The kingdom of God does not come with observation. Jesus taught the kingdom of God is within you. So much of what God is doing among His people is not visible to the physical eye. The building of God's Church is going on right now and remains solid and sure. The Lord builds upon His chosen foundation. By God's grace we know -

### **III. Its Foundation -- The Twelve Apostles.**

Again we are reminded that this is a vision through which God is communicating to us important spiritual truths. And so it is that this vision has another peculiarity. Not only does the Holy

City have twelve gates, but its foundation can be seen to be very special also!

Revelation 21:14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The Lord sent His disciples out to make disciples of all the nations. They began the mission of the New Testament Church of proclaiming the gospel to every creature. It was a clear declaration of the way of life. **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved”** (Mark 16:16)!

This ministry begun by the Apostles continues today. Whatever we do is built upon what the Lord had them do as He sent them out into the world. In our gospel we read His promise of the Holy Spirit who would give them the blessing of recalling accurately and recording perfectly all that the Lord had said and done. They got their message from the Lord Himself, and they passed that message down to us by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Some try to make a distinction between the record of the Gospels and the writings of Paul in epistles. It is a false and misleading distinction. Jesus appeared to Paul and called Him to be His messenger of the gospel to the gentiles. Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit also. By inspiration Peter attested to the writings of the Apostle Paul that they were Spirit inspired words of wisdom.

**2 Peter 3:14-18** Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 15 and consider that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

The Lord assures us in these words through Peter as well as through the visions of John that we have a sure apostolic word. When we open our Bibles and read of our Savior, whether it be of Jesus' miracles or His sermons or His sufferings recorded in the gospels, or of the wonders of our salvation expounded by Paul, or Peter, or John in the epistles, we have a sure and certain truth. Upon these teachings given to us by God through His apostles the Lord has built His church, the Holy City, the Heavenly Jerusalem. Hold fast to this truth which comes to us from God, for it is the way of life. Hold fast to this gospel of Christ, for our crucified Savior has risen from the dead, and gotten us the Victory! He has prepared a place for us, and shall come again to receive us to Himself that we may dwell in the radiance of His glory forever and ever.

**Conclusion: TLH 660:3**

“There at my Savior’s side Heav’n is my home; I shall be glorified Heav’n is my home; There are the good and blest, Those I love most and best; and there I, too, shall rest, Heav’n is my home.”

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.