

## Saints Triumphant 2022

Revelation 22:1-5; November 13 & 14, 2022

This place is just amazing. It is the perfect place to go on vacation. There are no worries, no troubles, no stress and no phones. There is only peace and relaxation. There is no place like it. It is wonderful. It is practically paradise. It is your happy place.

For me, I would have to say Alaska. Nancy and I had the opportunity to go there are 6 years ago. It was one of those bucket-list places. So, for our 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, we went. The highlight was going on a small plane and landing on one of the glaciers on Mount Denali. It is one of those places that you have to see to fully appreciate its beauty. It is practically paradise.

I wonder what it must have looked like standing in the middle of the Garden of Eden. I wonder what it must have been like for Adam and Eve to walk in paradise with God himself. I wonder what true paradise must have looked like in Eden. Yet, when the Bible talks about the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden it is mostly a negative account. That's where the serpent came slithering down a tree to talk with Eve. Eve listened to Satan's lie and she ate the fruit that God had forbidden them to eat. Then she convinced Adam to eat as well. From that moment forward, everything went downhill. Paradise now was lost. Sin was now part of God's perfect paradise. If that is where the story ended, everything would be lost.

We daily experience the sin that entered the world on that day in Eden. As we go through the daily grind of life, it is so easy to take our eyes off of God just like Adam and Eve. It's to keep doing the same old thing day after day. For some of you here, you get up early before the kids. You make breakfast. Get them dressed. Throw them in the car and rush off to school. Then we go to work. We have a mountain of things. We work hard to knock down that mountain. Yet, there are days that we hardly seem to catch up. Then we pick up the kids. We make supper. We clean up. We get them to bed. We lay our head down on the pillow and fall asleep. We wake up and have to do it all again.

Maybe that routine is a little different. Maybe you don't have the kids running through your house any more. Yet, I would imagine that you have found yourself rushing through the grind of everyday life. Suddenly, you look at the calendar and you think: *"Yikes! I'm turning 30 now. I'm 50. I'm 60. I'm now 80 years old. Where did my life go?"* Your practically paradise is no longer here.

That is where John's visions come to us in the book of Revelation. In this last book of the Bible, God wants his people to know that even though Paradise has been lost, it is not lost forever. Throughout this book, God gives John these little glimpses of heaven. This book is full of all kinds of different symbols. Some of them we cannot even understand. Yet, God is painting a picture. In those glimpses we get a look at how Eden must have looked at the beginning of all creation.

God had given Adam and Eve paradise. There was no sin. There was no pain. There was work to be done, but they had no frustrations in doing that work. One of the other things that God gave them was to opportunity to freely worship Him. In that perfect paradise of Eden, God place two special trees. Moses describes these trees. **"The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters."** (Genesis 2:9-10) Then he gave them one command to follow. **"You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."** (Gen. 2:17) They worshiped God by freely and willingly following his command.

Then one day, the whole world changed. They sinned against their God who gave them paradise. Paradise was now gone. God was furious at Satan. God was furious with Satan. Satan inserted sin into God's perfect world and sin ruined everything. God put a curse on Satan and sin put a curse on earth and human beings. But God never lost control. He warned Satan what was coming: **"I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head but you will bruise his heel."** And then God went to work to put that plan into action. He sent his only Son as the seed of the woman. God's Paradise would not be lost forever. Why? Because God still loved his people. After the head of Satan would be crushed, God would restore paradise to his people.

Here in the book of Revelation, God now brings everything full circle back to Paradise. In the last chapter in the Bible, God paints the picture that had been lost in Eden. That really is the point of the words of our text this morning. We read the words of our text once again. **“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”**

Friendship would once again be restored between God and Man. Just like the river in Eden brought life to the Garden, the river in John’s vision brings life to all believers in heaven. This life comes from the Lamb, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. This life will never dry up. It will flow for an eternity. Access to the Tree of Life that had been in Eden would now be restored. It would now fulfill the purpose that God had originally given it. This tree would now bring life for all eternity for those who ate from it; for those who trusted the promises of God. Day after day, month after month, year after year, for ever and ever it produces life-preserving and life-sustaining blessings. The disasters and diseases are gone; no more smallpox, no more Covid-19, no more Alzheimer’s, no more cancer. We will in perfect health for eternity. God will once again walk with his people in Paradise.

We wait for the day when we will join God in heaven. As we wait, we remember those who have already gone ahead of us to join him in heaven. We look forward to the day when we will be reunited with them and God for all eternity. The Paradise that was lost in Eden will be perfectly restored in the Lamb of God. What a day that will be. Amen.