

Father God, we do thank you for the opportunity to be here together today. We love you and we appreciate you. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for binding us together and leading us in all truth. Jesus, it is you who is the head of this church. It is you who is the head of the Church Universal. May your church expand your kingdom this day, preaching truth by your Spirit. We ask for your guidance today as we sing and as we pray and as we explore your Word, Lord. Teach us all you would like us to know. In Jesus' name, Amen. So as I said, today is going to be more of a read-through and a talk-through than a preaching. Because we want to demonstrate the idea that we just celebrated the birth of Christ through the construct of Advent that led to the blatant of the Christ's candle Christmas Eve. But there's more. We know that that's not the end of the story. We know that all things will be reconciled unto Christ at the appropriate appointed time of Jesus. Revelation, we went through before, and we talked about how you can get really lost in the weeds of Revelation and how it relates to the times and how it relates to current times and how it relates to all of history and history to come and all of those things. It's a very complex book. But we broke it down into its metameritif, the big story. Those who persevere to the end will be saved. We kept hitting that and hitting that and hitting that. When we begin here in Revelation 19, you're going to be listening, and I've selected passages from 19, 20, and 21, you're going to be listening for things that Scripture is discussing that will be new, renewed, reborn, reestablished, all of those different things. And of course it becomes very overt when Christ comes again. You'll hear about that, you'll hear about the trumpets and all of those different things. When we begin in 19, chapter 18 really talks about the fall of Babylon. Babylon is destroyed. Now let me explain something about Babylon. Babylon became the term, and still is, in our own parlance, Babylon has become the term for all things that are awful about the secular world. Great empires, all of the nastiness and all of the human constructs that are unjust and unfair and exploitive and all of those things that we do not like, even about our own society. Do you remember when we preached from 1 Peter last week? That letter went out to churches in the Roman Empire and Peter says later on in the letter, "I am writing this letter from Babylon." Meaning, that term now encompasses all that is negative in the secular world, in itself. So now Revelation is talking about how that has been destroyed, all the judgment has been working through all of humankind. Judgment, the church is in the midst of judgment, Babylon has fallen, and now we're going to talk about the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. So that's the context when I pick up with Revelation 19 verse 1. That's where he says, "After this," he had just described in 18, the fall of Babylon and what it's going to look like and sound like and be like and the judgment that will fall upon people, etc. etc. The judgment that will fall upon the church. And then he says, "After this, I heard what sounded like a vast crowd in heaven shouting, 'Praise the Lord!' Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. His judgments," of which there have been a ton thus far, "are true and just. He has punished the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality. He has avenged the murder of his servants." The picture that Christ has painted through John is that Babylon is a great prostitute and she has seduced the church and the church is now with her. And so he's calling the bride out. He's calling the church out. And you can see what a nasty picture that is when you consider all of the aspects. But he's calling the church out. "And again their voices rang out, 'Praise the Lord!' The smoke from that city ascends forever and ever. Then the twenty-four elders and the four living beings fell down and worshipped God who was sitting on the throne. They cried out, 'Amen! Praise the Lord!' And from the throne came a voice that said, 'Praise our God, all His servants, all who fear Him, from the least to the greatest.'" This is the theme of Revelation. Eyes on Christ. That history will play out according to His will, according to His timeline. And you can even get completely distracted by Babylon. You can even get completely distracted by all of the prophetic imagery in here when really the entire book is Eyes on Christ. Be faithful. Be faithful to His word, church. Be faithful to His word. Don't be afraid to be a church. Don't be afraid to look like something different than a performance or a show or anything else that the secular world may have for you as entertainment. Don't be afraid of those things. You are holy. And so He's talking about Eyes on Christ and now we hear God Himself. "Let us be glad and rejoice and let us give honor to Him,

for the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb." This was spoken about in the Gospels. It's one of the parables that is told. They're calling the wedding feast and when the door closes, the door closes. And that is brought out by Jesus Himself and it's going to be brought out by Jesus again in His Revelation to the church. That when the door closes, the door closes. And all of those who are prepared for the wedding feast are welcome in. But the emphasis is, okay, so that there's your Eyes on Christ staying faithful in the wedding feast and then this emphasis is that the door will close. And this should bring an urgency to the church. We talk about this all the time. I talk about this in my own preaching and in my own life and all of those things. We talk about this over the holidays, Christmas season, when we talk family that may not be believers and having them with us. There should be a sense of urgency because as I preach on Christmas Eve, you don't know if you were hired in the morning or at noon or at three or at five. You don't know what time of the day it is in your own life, let alone anybody else's. So we should have a sense of urgency because the door to the wedding feast will close. This imagery is very rich. And the bride has prepared herself. This is the church. She has been given the finest of pure white linen to wear for the fine linen represents the good deeds of God's holy people. Again, don't be afraid to be holy. Don't be afraid to be a holy people. Don't be afraid to be a holy church. And the angel said to me, "Write this. Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb." And he added, "These are true words that come from God." Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said, "No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers and sisters who testify about their faith in Jesus. Worship only God." There it is again. And I may or may not have said this by the time we went through Revelation, but this was the sermon that I preached at the first wedding I ever conducted. Worship only God. I talked about all the new things and paralleled all the new things and all the regenerative properties of a holy marriage and all of that. But still, you do not worship one another, you do not worship your children, you do not worship church or any other idols. You worship only God. All of your healthy relationships will flow from that. I promise he could because he promises. For the essence of prophecy that is speaking the word of God is to give a clear witness to Jesus. That is something again we take very seriously here. "Then I saw heaven open, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly and wages a righteous war. His eyes were like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him that no one understood except himself. He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his title was The Word of God. The armies of heaven, dressed in the finest of pure white linen, followed him on white horses. From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God. The Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress, on his robe and his thigh was written this title, King of all kings and Lord of all lords." I included that because when we talk about joy to the world, the Lord has come, we get this Christmas image of a silent manger scene, a baby, all of those things. Revelation speaks about, and John speaks about it in his letters as well, about the Antichrist, and in fact the Antichrist is already here, and those who do not profess Jesus as Lord, Antichrist, right? And then Revelation talks about a great seducer that will even fool many professing Christians as the Antichrist, all of that. Eyes on Christ through the Word of God is the key to that, and secondly, when Christ comes again, he will not be coming as a helpless baby, he is coming as Yahweh. Now then, Lord of lords, King of kings, there will be no doubt when this happens. No doubt. And we read that and we can take heart in that, for if the bride is prepared for that, there will also be no fear when we see that, when we experience that. There will be fear in the hearts of men and women who have no clue, or have been the Antichrist on earth, but those who remain faithful to the end will be saved. Not some, not maybe, those who remain faithful to the end. So this image is powerful. It's cool, right? Clint Eastwood would be pale, right? All that stuff, right? We get all of that imagery going on, but the point is there will be no doubt when Christ returns, and his church should be glad for that day and when that day happens. Come, Lord Jesus. He's coming, and there will be no doubt. Now, we know these words. Babylon, the city, the empire, the image, all of the things that are represented by Babylon is judged, destroyed, and replaced by a new city, a new Jerusalem. And now we're not going to go into

all of the interpretations of Revelation. Does that mean the entire world is a literal city? It has these measurements and all these different things. The message is clear. Everything that is not of God will be destroyed. Gone. Everything and everyone who is of God will remain, and everything that was old, broken down, right? So far as the curse is found all throughout creation will be restored and renewed as it is reconciled back unto God the way it was in the beginning. So here Babylon is replaced by this. "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared, and the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." There's that imagery again. "I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, 'Look, God's home is now among His people. He will live with them and they will be His people. God Himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.'" Amen. This is the restoration of creation, and that is in the inclusion of human beings. And that perfection of mind, body, and spirit will obviously coincide perfectly with all of creation, just as it was in the garden. And this is something that we can stray a little bit from when we talk about heaven and hell. Oftentimes, scripture refers to the heavens. I saw a new heaven and a new earth. Right here, it did. And when it refers to the heaven or the heavens or the heavenlies, we're talking about the spiritual realm. Remember, the spiritual realm, the spiritual beings are created as well by God Almighty, as is the physical. And then we have these very unique creations that are spiritual beings in the physical. And we are going to be recreated as we should be. Divine Spirit, Holy Spirit, a holy body, a glorified body. This is heaven. This is the heaven that we talk about when we live in eternity. We know that to be absent from the body is to be present with Christ. We hear about paradise. Today, He will be with me in paradise. We hear about Abraham's bosom. I can't reach it from there. We don't hear about this in the Gospels until the second coming of Christ. So we know that to be absent from the body is to be present with God. But we don't know exactly what that looks like or is like. When we say somebody has passed and gone to heaven, this is the heaven that we await as His people. Right? The perfected creation. And the one sitting on the front said, "Look, I am making everything new." Everything means everything. And then He said to me, "Write this down for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." And He also said, "It is finished." That sounds familiar. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To all who are thirsty, I will give freely from the spring to the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God and they will be my children." It's so simple, like we preached last week, with that power of love, the dire circumstances. And what Peter has to say is so simple yet so profound. "The love of God is with you." We know when you're enduring. And it sounds inadequate, and that's what I tried to bring up last week. It is more than adequate, even though it sounds so simple. It is so powerful. And persevering, keeping your eyes on Christ through it all, not to the end, but to the new beginning, is what this journey is all about. "I will be their God and they will be my children." And then we know the full gospel is always preached, especially this is the revelation of Jesus. Cowards, unbelievers, corrupt murderers, immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, all liars, their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. We're not going to get into that aspect of it, but you need to know that when the door closes, the door closes. Repent now, all of you cowards, unbelievers, corrupt murderers, immoral people, witchcraft practitioners, idol worshipers. Repent now! This is what we preach. It's what we preach inside the church every week to strengthen ourselves and to know that we are not holier than thou. We need to hear that every week, if not more often. And to non-believers, especially those non-believers whom we care for because, I'll say it again, when the door closes, the door closes. "Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came up and said to me, 'Come with me, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.'" Going to verse 22, "I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God eliminates the city, and the Lamb is its light." And God said, "Let there be light." And then a couple days later, He created the sun. I mean, the sun. We know that about Genesis. God said, "Let there be light." Christmas Eve, we celebrate the light coming into the world. Are we

celebrating sunshine or lamps or candles? No. We're celebrating the light of life. The light of life that comes in the darkness. This harkens back, like I said, when you bookend the first three chapters of Revelation, or the first three chapters of Genesis, and the last three chapters of Revelation, you see Genesis and Revelation intertwined, inextricably intertwined. It means you can't pull them apart. In the beginning, God said, "Let there be light." And then a couple days later, He made the sun and the moon. Interesting. "The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. Its gates will never be closed at the end of the day, because there is no night there. And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. Nothing evil will be allowed." Sounds like, "Hey, come one, come all." But now we hear, "Nothing evil will be allowed." Those who persevere to the end will be allowed. If anyone practices shameful idolatry, we'll be allowed, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. "All things old will be made new again." We see the light of life, the light of the universe, restoring itself, Himself, as He was first brought into the universe in Genesis. And again, human words kind of escape the way, inadequate, God didn't bring Him in. God is pre-existent. But you know, He said, "Let there be light." And Jesus shone in the darkness. Before the sun and the moon, before the stars, Jesus shone in the darkness. The power of creation unfolded because the power of creation is the very Word of God. And Jesus Christ is the very Word of God. You see how it all is like this. It's one story. Beginning, middle, end. And it's all tied together beautifully. Verse 3, "In joy to the world, no more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make His blessings flow, far as the curse is found." Far as the curse is found. Now His blessing is going to restore that curse, the curse over creation. Again, this song in particular speaks of both in terms of baby Jesus and the return of Jesus. "He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove the glories of His righteousness and wonders of His love." We just read about the kings, those who are holy, those who have persevered, those who are in the Book of Life entering into the new city. Let's go backwards a little bit. Verse 2, "Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns. Let men their songs employ, while fields and floods, rocks and hills and plains repeat the sounding joy." We see in this the celebration that we celebrate Christmas morning. And we see in this song, it's the celebration of the church upon the return of Christ. The restoration of creation. Far as the curse is found, it will be restored and He will reign forever and ever. He will reign forever and ever. "Joy to the world," verse 1 says, "the Lord has come. Let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing." Heaven and nature. New heavens and a new earth. On that day, that evening, that morning when Christ first became, was born, heaven and nature sang. The angels were singing, the plan of salvation was revealed to them just as it is beginning to unfold to humankind. Stars in the sky, callings of the Magi, callings of the shepherds. There was rejoicing. There was a long journey ahead, even in His short 33 years, but there was rejoicing. And as we move through the spring season, through the Lent season, into the Easter season, we're going to condense those 33 years into a few months. And we're going to celebrate the completion, the pinnacle, of the salvific history of humankind. "Joy to the world." And what I'm going to get across to you today is that when we read of the judgment of humankind, and the judgment of the church, we should be significantly motivated to be true to our faith. There's no doubt about that. I don't have to say it. You should be significantly motivated to be grounded in the Word, to know Jesus through His Word, and as we read about the good deeds, live your life according to His will. Those are the only good deeds that you can do, for He is the only good there is. So we should be significantly motivated to behave as holy people. The children of God should look and behave differently than the children of Satan. There needs to be a difference. The house of God should look and be and sound differently than any of the houses of Satan and secular entertainment and secular idol worship that are out there. Do not be afraid. Our joy is Christ. And we have that joy now as we preach every Advent, and we will experience the fullness of that joy upon His return. We will not be afraid. Revelation 22, verse six says, "Then the angel said to me, 'Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true. The Lord God who inspires His prophets has sent His angel to tell His servants what will happen soon.'" Here we go. "Look, I am coming soon. Blessed are those

who obey the words of prophecy written in this book." And what are those words of prophecy? There is a lot there about what might happen in that. I've been trying to attach everything from global natural disasters to black helicopters and drones in the sky to Revelation. But what we do know from Revelation says those who obey the words of prophecy. What we do know is that those who practice the ways of the Lord, those who know Jesus, will be saved and there will be no reason for fear. "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things, and when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. But he said, 'No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God just like you and your brothers and the prophets, as well as all who obey what is written in this book. Worship only God.'" How many times does he have to say it? He's giving you. God is giving you the key. God is giving you the simple message, just like the simple message of last week. He says it over and over because he knows how dense we are and he knows how quickly we will fall away from those simple words, "worship only God." There's so much out there. I want you to be very intentional. This week, start this week. All these new things for the new year. Start this week. Where is your attention? Get a piece of paper, and I don't even want to do this, but I'm going to if I tell you to do it. Get a piece of paper and mark out the hours of the day and then write down what you're doing every hour of the day. Does any of it have to do with prayer, supplication to the Lord? Does any of it? Scrolling on Facebook, scrolling on Instagram, playing games. Oh, there I go. I read the Bible for half an hour. Yes! Seven hours of social media in half an hour of the Bible. That's what I'm afraid my book would probably look like. Wow. I really don't want to do that. OK. But I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it. "Worship only God." He tells us that again and again and again. Then he instructed me, "Do not seal up prophetic words in this book, for the time is near. Let the one who is doing harm continue to do harm. Let the one who is vile continue to be vile. Let the one who is righteous continue to live righteously. Let the one who is holy continue to be holy." We know that as we move through this, if we are inspired by the very Spirit of God, which is what "inspired" means, then we will be living righteously, covered by His righteousness, and living a holy life, called out of Babylon to be different, no matter our circumstances, no matter where we are. You as an individual, you as a family, we as a church. "Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes. They will be permitted to enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit from the tree of life. Outside the city are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idol worshipers, and all who love to live a lie." What would that mean? Love to live a lie? That has strong implications. "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star. The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' Let anyone who hears this say, 'Come.'" There is no indication of the fact that we should be fearful. He says, "Anyone who hears this say, 'Come.'" We should want this. And this is my biggest beef with revelation, the preaching of revelation. Preachers will try to instill terror into people. Oh, it will be awful and pain and death and destruction, not according to what I read for those who remain in the will of God. It is a strong motivator to live within the will of God according to the word of God. "Blessed are those who wash their robes. They will be permitted to enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit of the tree of life. Outside the city are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral and murderers. The idol worshipers and all who love to live a lie. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star. The spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' Let anyone who hears this say, 'Come.' Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life. And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the words of prophecy written in this book." If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person who plays described in this book. And if anyone removes any of the words from this book of prophecy, God will remove that person's shared tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book. Don't mess with the word of God. If you don't like revelation, you can't just go back in and change it so you like it. If you don't like the idea of judgment, you can't just go back in the word of God and write out all of the things about

judgment. If you don't like the fact that Jesus is not just some hippie dude in sandals walking around, you know, blessing people, that He is our righteous judge of all humankind. If you don't like King of Kings and Lord of Lords coming down to recreate heaven and earth and judge humankind, you can't go into the Bible and just rewrite it, although there are many churches and many preachers and many Christians who ignore those parts of the Bible. But this is the truth of that baby that was born that we just celebrated. This is who He is and He is in His glorified state and He will bodily return to earth. His church, those who are worthy of the banquet, will rise to meet Him in the sky and return to the earth to aid in the judgment. This is it. So I guess the question is, are you afraid right now or are you feeling confident right now? Not like cocky, not like, "Oh yeah, I'm fine." No, think about it. He returned right now confident or afraid? Good question for everybody. He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come Lord Jesus." Over and over again, "Worship only God, come Lord Jesus. Worship only God, come Lord Jesus. Worship only God, come Lord Jesus." If you worship only God, then you pray, "Come Lord Jesus," because you are not afraid of His return. You want His return. That's what is being taught here. That is what is being reinforced here. That is what is being used to motivate those who proclaim the name of Jesus Christ as their Savior. As it says a little bit earlier, "Are you living a lie or are you praying, "Come Lord Jesus, come?" May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's holy people. Amen.