Sunday, 5/22/22

**Revelation 21:10, 22—22:5**

10And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. 22I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. 27But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

1Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3Nothing accursed will be found there anymore. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; 4they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

**Sermon**

There’s been a lot of apocalyptic thinking in recent years. With the climate changing, political polarization increasing, Covid mutating, and violence and racism spreading, people are scared. Some people are arming themselves and preparing for war; other more hopeful people are trying to change the world for the better while there’s still time. Some churches are picking through scripture for anything that might correlate to current events to show that the end is near and Christ will return any time. From there it’s a small step to pointing the finger at some group that will be excluded from heaven, or that should shape up before they get us all smitten. That’s what happens when faith is combined with fear.

It's unfortunate that readers often get hung up on all the plagues and suffering in Revelation. If they got to the end, their view might be more hopeful.

* Mixed metaphors: going up a mountain, new Jerusalem descending from the clouds, God is the temple, the city has a river running through it with a tree on both sides
* Metaphor, not history: John of Patmos reveals what heaven is like
  + Life directly in God’s presence
    - no further need for religion/scripture/theology: God will be present to us
    - Understanding good/bad, right/wrong
    - Light to see by
  + Healing, sanctification—made worthy to be in God’s presence
    - River of the water of life: baptismal waters washing us clean
* Choice: what’s important? What’s worth living for? What’s eternal?
  + 27But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.
  + 3Nothing accursed will be found there anymore.
  + The gate is open all day, and there’s no night, so nobody is shut out
  + But uncleanness/falsehood/etc. aren’t tolerated: we need to give these things up, and some people exclude themselves rather than give up what they hold onto
* What will be disallowed?
  + Racism
  + Hatred
  + Violence
* Who gets in? who doesn’t?
  + Those willing to change, be like Jesus, let go of other commitments (political party, theological commitments that don’t let God in, etc.)
  + Those who hold onto vices, other commitments (white identity, nationalism, prejudices about others being out) don’t get in unless they let go of these things that cause division
* What do we get in return?
  + God’s presence
  + Cleaned, sanctified: our sins will be washed away and we’ll be transformed
* God’s faithfulness
  + Our names are written in his book: nobody can delete us
  + His name is on our foreheads: we live into this