

Sermon Draft for May 25, 2025
Text: Revelation 21:9–14, 21–27
Sermon: “Wanna Come See?”

This Sixth Sunday of Easter leads directly to Ascension Day this coming Thursday. The Easter season has been filled with the message of the resurrection as a very physical reality for the believers. The language of the texts reminds us of the importance of the physical office of the ministry. We have heard the sacramental imagery that suggests the importance of the bodily benefits of the resurrection received in Baptism and the blessed Sacrament. All of this is moving us to the importance of the ascension.

So, in these last weeks of Easter, there is a strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit dwelling in the midst of the church by these means and entering into our bodily existence.

In the days of Solomon, people came from the ends of the earth to see the riches and beauty of his kingdom. Yet we know that that kingdom was torn apart because of the unfaithfulness of the king and his people.

We gaze at the large, beautiful church buildings in our cities that once were filled with Sunday worshipers, and perhaps we long for the good old days when the church was the center of activity for many. Today, those empty structures remind us that many have turned from their baptisms and the truth of Scripture, willingly adopting the practices and values of living together outside of marriage, of so-called gay marriage, the denial of male and female, and a lack of love for the unborn and the elderly. All this may cause us to despair, but today's text gives us a vision of what the church truly is and will be when she is faithful to the Lord's Word and his Holy Sacraments (Revelation 21:9).

It wasn't yet heaven; it was still Iowa. But Kevin Costner and James Earl Jones seemed to be on the very edge of revelation. Remember the movie Field of Dreams? Costner has built a baseball diamond in the middle of his Iowa cornfield, and long-dead major leaguers, including Shoeless Joe Jackson, have come out of the corn to play.

Great movie! One of my favorites but it's not only about baseball but also about family; Costner gets to meet and reconcile with his father who'd passed away years before and was also a ballplayer.

Near the end, as the players are leaving the field and heading back into the corn, Shoeless Joe turns back to James Earl Jones and invites him to come along, into the corn, the place that does represent heaven: "Wanna come see?" Jones is a writer, and he promises to write about it. Of course, the movie ends, Jones never reappears, and we're still waiting to read his vision of heaven.

Jesus says in today's Gospel, ***"Now I am leaving the world and going to the Father"*** (John 16:28). He doesn't invite us to come with him yet; that's still in our future. But in our text today from Revelation, an angel does invite the apostle John to come and catch a glimpse of heaven. Wouldn't we like to see?

Even as we still long for a full revelation, we welcome the invitation ***"Come, I Will Show You."***

Behold, the holy city, the Bride of the Lamb. John's vision gives a glimpse of where we will live in heaven. It is a magnificent place. It is a place of twelves and threes. Twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes. Three gates at the east, three gates at the north, three gates at the south and three gates at the west all with an angel standing at each. We don't know if these angels were protectors or greeters.

Above each gate the name of a tribe. The city had twelve foundations and on each of them the name of an apostle. That gives us an understanding of the importance of the apostles, that they were considered such a foundational part of Christianity.

But the holy city is really equated with the Bride who isn't a place, but is the church, God's people living in heaven. She is the Wife brought to Christ even as was the woman brought to the man (Genesis 2:22–23). We are being invited to see a vision of ourselves, washed clean by the Man who gave his life for his Bride (Ephesians 5:25–27; Revelation 7:14).

Where's the temple. John sees that the city has no temple (v 22a). Perhaps surprising, given the long Old Testament history and imagery (Ezekiel 40–47). But no temple is needed! The Lord God and the Lamb are the temple (v 22). The temple always symbolized God's presence. In heaven, we will see Christ face to face.

Our vision is God's presence in the means of grace. We see Christ present on the unshakable foundation of the Scriptures. Through the Sacraments we see the portals that draw us into the Divine. Behold, the Light that has come into the world. Again, John sees no sun because the glory of God and the Lamb, the lamp, give light (v 23).

From the beginning it was really this way. A Word gave light even before the sun was created (Genesis 1:3, 14). That Word was the eternal Son (John 1:1–3). Now the Light has come in the flesh in the beauty of the incarnation (John 1:14; 8:12). That Light had to be extinguished for a time (Luke 23:44–45a).

But Easter dawn showed we live in a new day. In heaven, John sees, the Lamb is the only light. We will see Christ's shining face always (v 25). His light will be the glory of kings and people of every nation (vs 24, 26).

If you're a baseball fan and you've ever been to Dyersville, Iowa, to walk out on that Field of Dreams, well, it's a moving experience.

James Earl Jones says, "It reminds us of all that once was good. And it could be again." Maybe good, but still of this fallen world. The vision John gives us is above that. And it will be. And it will be ours.

Amen