

## TEXT – Revelation 21:1-6

Introduction: Life would be easier without confirmation. That's kind of a bold statement and I realize that. But it's an honest statement from a pastor's point of view, from a confirmand's point of view, and probably from a parent's point of view. Pastors would have a little extra time off from teaching class, correcting assignments and trying to get students to do their work. For the confirmands there wouldn't be all the memory work and the terror of examination in front of the congregation. Parents wouldn't have to keep on their kids to do their memory work and assignments for Catechism class. There would be no need for Confirmation robes or pictures. Confirmands might be a little bummed because they wouldn't get a party and some extra cash but I'm sure we could come up with another reason to have a party for our kids. So why have confirmation? Confirmation not only prepares confirmands for the Lord's Supper, to receive it in a worthy manner for the strengthening of their faith. Confirmation is also about teaching young people to stand up for their faith and to stay faithful to Jesus and his Word no matter what, even to the point of death. That's the encouragement our young people and all of us receive today. We want to REMAIN FAITHFUL TO JESUS. In Revelation chapter 21, John reminds those who remain faithful to Jesus that 1) he has prepared a new home and that 2) he is faithful to his promises.

### I. He has prepared a new home

- John is nearing the end of the visions that the Lord Jesus had allowed him to see. All the visions that John saw and wrote down are various descriptions of the New Testament era, that is, the time between Jesus' first coming and his second coming. John is not really stating anything new, nothing that hasn't already been revealed by Jesus or the apostles and prophets who wrote the Scriptures. Rather Jesus through John is adding a little more punch and pizzazz in fantastic imagery regarding the things we continue to experience even right now as N.T. Christians.
- Chapter 20 ended with Satan's punishment in the lake of fire in hell and all people being judged on the last day. John concluded with this message, "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Now the vision John is allowed to see turns heavenward – to the eternal blessings that believers in Christ receive, namely, those whose names are written in the book of life.
- Those who remain faithful to Jesus will survive the last day with flying colors. They will be ushered into a new world. It is the new heavens and the new earth, which may be a re-creation of the current heavens or sky and the earth. Peter wrote regarding the judgment, "The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." The phrase "laid bare" could suggest that the new heavens and the new earth will be created from the ashes of this world that God destroyed.
- John elaborates more on what this will look like later on in the chapter. We know that it will be nothing like we've ever seen. John's vision then focuses on those who will be in heaven who are described as the New Jerusalem, the Holy City coming down out of heaven from God. The believers are pictured as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. Earlier in Revelation John saw believers in heaven wearing white robes and waving palm branches.
- The white robes symbolize their purity, the complete absence of sin and the effects of sin. The palm branches are meant to picture the joy and celebration of being in heaven. Who doesn't want to be there? No one would sacrifice their faith and their eternity for some measly earthly pleasure and joy. Ah yes, sinners are very prone to sacrificing the eternal for the earthly and some have, others will too. How many young people have strayed from their vows to remain faithful to their Lord after confirmation? Some we know come back but others never do.
- Perhaps we underestimate the power of our sinful world, our own sinful flesh and the devil himself. These spiritual enemies are the masters of luring faithful Christians away from Christ in a variety of ways. Remember that our sinful nature is entirely evil and opposed to everything about our Savior. Paul says, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature." Once the sinful nature is given free reign for a certain amount of time, it's bye-bye faith.
- So we want to keep the focus on the eternal. We want to be in heaven to live with God face to face. There in heaven God will wipe away every tear from our eyes because there will be no more death or crying or pain. With God we will live a sin-free life of true joy and happiness. To get there God needs to dwell in us here through faith in Jesus. Our Savior's work as the Lamb of God who laid down his life for his sheep, who shed his holy, precious blood on the cross to take away our sins cannot take a back seat to anything in our life.
- Remaining faithful to Jesus means remaining faithful to Jesus. We ask our confirmands if they intend to continue steadfast in the teaching of God's Word and to conform all of their lives to its teaching and to be faithful in the use of God's Word and sacrament. They respond, "I do, and I ask God to help me." Those of you who were confirmed in our church or another WELS church made similar promises. That is the goal of all Christians, isn't it?
- This is why the church exists – to bring people into God's holy family through faith in Jesus and to keep people faithful to Jesus through his Word and sacraments. The odds are not promising for our young confirmands. But odds are just odds. We pray for our young people that they remain faithful to Jesus, and as those who are confirmed in our faith we ask God to help us serve as role models for them. By remaining faithful to Jesus we know that we will inherit what Jesus has prepared – the new heaven and the new earth, our home of righteousness.

Transition: We want to remain faithful to Jesus knowing that he has prepared a new home for us in heaven. As we are tested and tried by life's temptations to stray from our faith in Jesus, John's vision reminds us that we can rely on Jesus. We rely on Jesus because we know that he is faithful to his promises.

## II. He is faithful to his promises

- In this vision John hears God the Father who is seated on his throne say, "I am making everything new!" Heaven is the new world order. The old order of things has completely passed away. Everything in heaven God will make new and shiny, in dazzlingly splendor. In the previous verse God stated to John that in the new heavens and the new earth there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. Life in heaven will so different from what we experience now. Imagine not having the slightest bit of suffering or uneasiness mentally, emotionally, physically, or spiritually.
- Lest we think that this is just a bunch of hopeless optimism on John's part as he was writing to suffering Christians, John hears the Father tell him, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." Whatever God says is trustworthy and true. In Numbers we read, "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" God's Word and promises will not and cannot fail. There are three things you can count on – death, taxes, and God's Word.
- John is told why God's Word is trustworthy and true. God the Father whom John saw seated on his throne told him, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End." Whatever God says or promises is already done. God, who lives in the eternal present, the timeless today, sees everything he has spoken of as already done. Peter writes, "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."
- Our God is looking at us in heaven right now. We are already there. I suppose it's like watching a delayed broadcast of a Brewers game from a couple of days ago. You know the outcome because you heard the final score and maybe even saw some highlights. You watch the game being played but it is already done, maybe the Brewers even won the game. To bolster this thought God reminds us that he is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. He is in control of all things from beginning to end so they happen just as he says they will happen.
- Our young people and all of us are constantly being tempted to rely on something else, other than God and his Word. It might be people, friends and family. It might be worldly possessions, things that we obsess over to the point of ignoring our faith. Can you count on family and friends to never, ever let you down in any way? Can you count on material things to continue to supply you with joy and happiness throughout your life? Think about this. Once faithful Christians have abandoned their faith and now rely on someone or something other than God.
- Our God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit will never, ever let us down. It is completely impossible for Jesus to say, "I am with you always," and then leave us even for a millisecond. God cannot (yes, in our way of thinking this is something God can't do), he cannot let something work out for our spiritual or eternal harm. Paul writes, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."
- We can guarantee only one thing to our confirmands because God makes this guarantee, that his Word is trustworthy and true. Jesus' own death on the cross and his resurrection on the third day just as he promised is proof that God loves us and has redeemed us from our sins and as promised will take us to himself in heaven. Paul writes, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- As is often stated in the Bible, God is leading us through Christ his Son to the refreshing waters of eternal life. God continues his trustworthy promises to John, "To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life." Notice that this eternal blessing is given to those who thirst, who recognize as sinners their spiritual need for forgiveness and salvation. God also mentions that this eternal blessing is without cost. It is a gift of his free and faithful grace in Christ Jesus, not anything we could earn. Finally it is the spring of the water of life, the refreshing waters of a peaceful calm in heaven.
- "Stay thirsty, my friends," as the commercial says, not for Dos Equis beer but for the waters of salvation. Remain faithful to Jesus. Let nothing but Jesus satisfy your spiritual longing for true joy and happiness that will last forever with him in heaven. So many things disappoint us. So many things go wrong. There are numerous regrets and wishing things were different. But Jesus never, ever lets us down. Even when we let him down and stray from him, he welcomes us back and forgives us completely through the blood he shed. He then encourages us to trust him even more. By remaining faithful to Jesus we truly have someone we can always count on.

Conclusion: Would life be easier without confirmation? Sure it would from a worldly point of view. Would it be better? No! With confirmation you get a party and some cash. But you get so much more. Confirmation does what the word means it confirms or strengthens faith in Christ by studying God's Word. It is our prayer for our confirmands and my prayer for each one of you that you remain faithful to Jesus so that by God's grace we can all be together forever in heaven. Amen.