

“The Tree of Life”—Revelation 22:1-2

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “The Tree of Life”, is Revelation 22:1-2 → *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. This is the text.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

P Christ is risen!

G He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

You were created to live forever physically. This is a very difficult fact to comprehend since so much of life is filled with death. Yet, if we go back to the creation of mankind and God’s instructions to Adam, we will discover in those words that all mankind was created to live forever physically. As the Master Gardener, Yahweh planted a garden in which He made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good

for food. *The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* (cf. Genesis 2:9). Then He told Adam that he was free to *eat of every tree of the garden* except *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* (cf. Genesis 2:16-17). It's not that there was something wrong with that tree. It was actually set aside as kind of a "place of worship." It offered Adam & Eve the privilege to live in obedience to the LORD's command by refraining to eat of it.

But what was this *tree of life* all about. The next mention of it comes in Genesis 3 in connection to Adam & Eve's becoming sinners. The LORD said in Genesis 3:22 → *Behold, the man has become like one of Us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever . . .* It seems that eating the fruit of this tree was a means of sustaining eternal life, kind of like a "means of grace." Since they were created to live forever, eating it's fruit was in keeping with the eternal life they already possessed.

However, God banished them from the Garden of Eden and this tree in particular. To make sure he could not *take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever*, He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that *turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life* (cf. Genesis 3:24). Because they now lived in a state of sinfulness with broken relationships, sicknesses and ultimately physical death, eating from *the tree of life* and living forever in sin and suffering was not what God's original will for

them entailed. He still wants all people to live forever **in a perfect relationship with Himself, others and His whole creation**. This cannot happen by eating of *the tree of life*. It must happen by partaking of another tree.

2 Peter 3:13 says: *According to His promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells*. What promise? The promise given in Genesis 3:15 of an offspring of the woman Who would crush the devil's power, which was fulfilled when Jesus died on the tree of Golgatha, the cross. Faith in the Person & Work of Jesus is how Adam & Eve, the people of the Old Testament, the people of Jesus' day and we today will live forever. You see, the privilege of eating from *the tree of life* comes only for those who are already living forever.

This is what our text describes in the vision of heaven. We will rise with new physical glorified bodies (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:42-57) when Jesus comes back on the Last Day (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). When our text describes heaven it is a physical existence with the restoration of God's perfect creation. Similar to the Garden of Eden (i.e. Paradise), heaven will have *the river of the water **of life**, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb*. Even this vision harkens back to the tree of the cross where Jesus laid down His life as *the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world*, and brings all who believe in Him to the tree of life in heaven.

Verse 2 of our text says *also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month* will be present. The number twelve in Revelation is symbolic of the Church in many ways (i.e. the twelve tribes representing the Old Testament Church; the twelve apostles representing the New Testament Church). Thus, the *twelves kinds of fruit* produced *each month* can give us a picture of the Church triumphant being sustained physically forever in “the life of the world to come.” (cf. Nicene Creed) All who repent of their sins, trusting in the Lamb sacrificed for those sins on the tree of the cross will *get to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God* (cf. Revelation 2:7).

In the meantime, the Church militant—that is, we who live this side of *paradise*, engaged in spiritual battle against the presence of the devil and his temptations to sin—have been given a gift by which we can continue to be sustained in the new life we share in Christ. It is the gift of Christ’s body and blood given and shed for the forgiveness of sins which we dispense and receive in the Lord’s Supper. Based upon His word of promise *we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes* (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26) *to drink it new with us in His Father’s kingdom* (cf. Matthew 26:29).

The communion liturgy in Divine Service *Setting Four* of our hymnal reminds us of this truth as it speaks about the trees. Open your hymnal

to page 209. In the middle paragraph under the “Prayer of Thanksgiving” it reads:

In Your righteous judgment You condemned the sin of Adam and Eve, who ate the forbidden fruit, and You justly barred them and all their children from the tree of life. Yet, in Your great mercy, You promised salvation by a second Adam, Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and made His cross a life-giving tree for all who trust in Him.

Verse 2 of our text says: *The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* This prayer of thanksgiving actually speaks about *the healing of the nations.* It is the eternal healing in heaven which is for all peoples of all nations. It is a gift of God in Jesus Christ, offered for the forgiveness of sins on His “life-giving tree for all who trust in Him.”

P Christ is risen!

G He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Jesus says to His Church militant:

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

*To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life,
which is in the paradise of God.*

(Revelation 2:7)

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