

Easter VII (C); Revelation 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20-21

By The Reverend Todd DeLaney

Did you realize that a few minutes ago we heard the very last prayer in the Bible? “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.” These are the words of John of Patmos as he wakes from his vision, which he writes own in what we now know as the Book of Revelation. *Come, Lord Jesus.* A succinct prayer, to be sure, but no less powerful. It sounds to me like a breath prayer. A breath prayer is a prayer that is short enough to be said slowly in a single breath. <demonstrating> *Come, Lord Jesus.* Praying a breath prayer is a wonderfully cleansing practice that can help us to stay immersed in the healing waters of God’s presence. A breath prayer can be anything that you can say with one breath:

Have mercy on me, Lord.

Help me, Jesus.

I put my trust in Christ.

Lord, grant me peace.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Today, I’d like to do something a little different. I’d like to spend our sermon time in guided meditation, using these three words – this last prayer in the Bible

– as a foundation. I invite you to get as comfortable as you can. Uncross whatever you have crossed: legs, arms, fingers. If you’d like to close your eyes, please do so. If you go to sleep we won’t hold it against you! If you keep your eyes open, then at least allow your focus to soften. Take a deep breath **<take a breath>** and as you exhale slowly, whisper that three-word prayer to yourself: “*Come, Lord Jesus.*” Allow the sibilant sound at the end of “*Jesus*” to continue as you breathe out. Whenever I say this prayer during our guided meditation, I will give space for you to take more deep breaths and breathe the prayer for yourselves, if you choose.

There is power in these words. They begin with the invitation: “*Come.*” We hear echoes of Jesus inviting the disciples with the same word: “*Come and see.*” (John 1:39, 46). We hear Jesus beckon forward those who were barred from him: “Let the little children *come* to me” (Matthew 19:14). We hear Jesus invite people to find refreshment in his presence: “*Come* to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). We hear Jesus invite us to come to him, and now we reciprocate the invitation: “*Come, Lord Jesus.*” **<pause>**

Our invitation is not a blind one; it has an addressee: Jesus whom we call “*Lord.*” Sovereign. The One who is truly in charge. The Alpha and the Omega,

the first and the last, the One in whom all our endings find new beginnings. This Lord reigns over the living and the dead, now and into eternity. St. Paul speaks the truth when he says: “If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s [possession]” (Romans 14:8). This Lord is our Savior; we live in his territory, in his realm; we owe him our fealty. And to remind ourselves whose grass is under our feet and whose air we breath, we pray: “Come, *Lord Jesus*.” <pause>

Who are we to address such a Lord on a first name basis? How dare we? We dare because he has called us friends and has made known to us everything that he heard from his father (John 15:15). We dare because he knows and calls us each by name and leads us out to the still waters and green pastures (John 10:3; Psalm 23). We dare because “we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). Jesus is our friend and our brother, as well as our Lord, and thus we share the intimacy of first names. And so we pray: “Come, *Lord Jesus*.” <pause>

There is power in these words, in this final prayer in the Bible. Three little words that speak of invitation, sovereignty, and relationship. Whenever we breathe out this prayer, we affirm our relationship with Jesus Christ. We locate ourselves as his subjects. And we invite him to be present in our midst.

And yet even as we make this invitation to him, we remember that all prayer begins in God, that the desire to pray is catalyzed by God reaching out to us. Our invitation is really an RSVP, a response to God's movement in our lives. Our breath prayer is an echo of Jesus' own invitation. Listen for this invitation with the ear of your heart. When you breathe out the prayer, listen for the echo of Jesus calling your name. "Come, Lord Jesus." <pause>

As this prayer begins to soak into your soul and inhabit your breathing, you may begin noticing Jesus' reciprocal invitation appearing again and again. This invitation may fill you with peace, and it may also make you feel uncomfortable:

Come to me in places of darkness where you would rather not look.

Come to me when I'm alone at the table at school or in the soup kitchen.

Come to me when I'm picked last at recess.

"Come to me when I am hungry or thirsty.

Come to me when I need clothing and shelter.

Come to me when I'm a stranger in your midst.

Come to me when I'm sick or in prison." (Matthew 25)

Come to me when no one else will grant me the dignity I deserve.

Come to me as I come to you as the least of these.

When we pray our breath prayer, we invite ourselves to encounter Jesus in these ways and countless others. The air we take in feeds oxygen to our blood and the blood pumps through our hearts and our hearts cry out to the Living God and the Living God sends us out into the world in peace to love and serve. As we walk out into that world, we continue to breathe – in, out, in, out. And the breath prayer carries us to Jesus disguised in so many forms. “Come, Lord Jesus.”

<pause>

This is the last prayer in the Bible, the last word in the bound volume we call our Holy Scriptures. But God’s story continues long after the last pen stroke in the Bible, for God is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the One in whom all our endings find new beginnings. The Bible ends with this prayer, but the prayer begins again on our breath. Each breath a new beginning, planted deep in the rich soil of reciprocal invitation: Jesus to us, us to Jesus. And so we pray now and with our next breath and the one after that these words of invitation, of fealty, of relationship, of love, and of service: “*Come, Lord Jesus.*”

<pause>

Amen.