

Ephesians 13-12-29a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church, the last Sunday in the year. It is a privilege for us to assemble. We see from time to time the degrading and eroding of our culture in the past week or two.

You've been able to see this in the public sector, so to speak, the realms of your entertainment shows on TV. If you express a Christian point of view, you get ballyhooed and temporarily suspended. Of course, now they've received such a backlash.

I'm of two minds. I don't know whether they were caught off guard by the response or if the whole thing was planned to raise ratings. You can't underestimate these people, and by I do mean under.

People in the entertainment industry will do anything for ratings, so it could all be part of a master plot or they could have simply bumbled into it. You can choose. Of course, the upshot of it is that their little quacking program will continue unabated with everybody in place.

They're also going to run a huge affirmative action, love, unity, and brotherhood for all people in conjunction with it to make sure nobody gets the impression that anybody would speak a discouraging word about any evil Bible-banned lifestyles. It is only a matter of time. Some of you listening to the sound of my voice will live to see the day where guys like me will not be able to stand up and preach all portions of the Word of God.

It will be criminalized. It's coming. Just prepare yourself.

These are just the early skirmishes. The advanced parties are out. They're feeling out the lines, determining what the strength is.

Our numbers are small. Their numbers are great. Our God is in heaven, but we know that there is a constant, just like the second law of thermodynamics, and we are not on an uptrend in terms of our national attitude toward God.

We're on a downtrend, so just stay calm, prepare yourself. Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. By the way, if you heard a little flap about the veterans not getting their Christmas cards, that also got reversed, and they got their cards.

They tried that in Texas, of all places, and, oh, well, we had an employee that didn't really understand the policy. All the, you know, Merry Christmas, Happy Day for the birth of Jesus, and all that. The veterans got the cards, they, oh, sorry, we goofed.

So if you heard anything about that, you know, boo on the VA in Texas, well, they've un-boomed themselves for the moment in claiming that, you know, it was just a misunderstanding. It was all a big misunderstanding. Trust me, it's coming.

These are just the, these are the probes, you know, where are the weak spots, where can we get away with it, how soon can we get the public behind us. When's the last time you heard any outrage over two same-gendered people engaging in intimate behavior on television? First few times it happened, huge outcry, letters were written, bans were instituted, boycotts of companies. Heard any of that lately? And how much of that's on television? I'm telling you, that's the trend.

Just prepare yourself, be calm. Our warfare is not against flesh and blood. Write it down.

Our warfare is not against flesh and blood. Don't be distracted, don't be sidetracked into trying to win a culture war that is unwinnable, because the people in the culture are faithless. You can't win people to an attitude that they don't have.

You can't get them to respect a God they don't love and don't serve. You can't do it. You can't impose it.

You can't legislate it. You can't cry out for it and show the logic of it. You can't demonstrate from history what happens when you abandon it.

They are deaf, dumb, and blind in that regard, and biblically so. Seeing they see and do not perceive, hearing they hear and do not understand. This is why we have the Old Testament account of the divided kingdom and the eventual demise of the northern kingdom and ultimately the southern kingdom.

It is there for our instruction. You and I live in the midst of a nation that is on the decline for all the same reasons. So don't be distracted from the real battle.

It's great. Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord. It's been a wonderful thing for the older ones of us to grow up in a time when the vestiges of that were still apparent in our nation, but they are rapidly disappearing and that's okay.

We're going to see this morning that we have a citizenship and a membership in a household that far transcends anything that is of an earthly nature. It is of an infinitely greater quality. It partakes of an infinitely greater reality, and it is unending and eternal.

The things of this earth are passing away. So as you see these things happen, we note them, we observe them, we interpret, we apply, but at the same time we remember that our warfare is against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age against whom we wrestle. We wrestle.

You know the thing about wrestling? Have you ever heard of anybody being killed in a wrestling match? It's not a fatal sport. Maybe somebody got their neck twisted at some point, but generally speaking, even in boxing you occasionally hear of somebody getting clocked and having a brain hemorrhage or something. But wrestling, it's all about getting pinned to the mat.

Superior skill, superior experience and wisdom being demonstrated, strength employed in a meaningful way so that it is demonstrated that the other guy is defeated. That's what wrestling is. And God chose that picture for a reason.

We are not in a conflict where we can be killed, and we are not in a conflict where we can kill the enemy. It is a demonstration of superiority, and we have the opportunity to wrestle against the principalities and powers and pin them to the mat in our daily lives. So it's an apt figure.

In Dr. Hawkins' book, *The Joshua Code*, we are rapidly approaching the back, and we have a verse here that is so much more than it appears. This often happens when you are reading the Apostle John, whether it's in the Gospel, whether it's in his three epistles, whether it is the book of Revelation, which he did by the way write, John the Apostle is John the Revelator, don't let anybody tell you any different. There has been this rumor going around that there was a different John, because they just can't reconcile the first chapter.

How could the Apostle John be so awestruck and seemingly non-intimate with the Lord Jesus Christ that appears to him in chapter 1? They said, well, that just can't be the same John, because he was the disciple Jesus loved, and why wouldn't they sit down and have fish over a fire or something in Revelation chapter 1? Well, that's a faulty conclusion. I don't have time to go into all the reasons why, but trust me when I tell you, the book of Revelation is written by the Apostle John. That's why all he has to do is say, hi there, I'm John.

It's like Cher, there's only one. You don't have to say, I'm Cher Bono. You just say Cher.

She doesn't have to say Winfrey, she can just say Oprah. There are certain people who one name will do it, and they don't need a lot of qualifiers and addendums to it, and this is the case. So in Revelation chapter 22 verse 17, this is the verse that is suggested to us this morning in chapter 48 out of 52 in the *Joshua Code*.

And the spirit and the bride say come, let him who hears say come, and let him who is thirsty come. Let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Now this is one of the few times where I'm going to take a slightly different tack than O.S. does here, because this and Matthew 28, 19, and 20 are two of the most frequently cited verses when it comes to encouraging the evangelical view of Christianity. If anybody asks you, are you an evangelical Christian, of course you say, yes, I got evangelized and I am happy to be an evangelist, to share the gospel with anybody who is interested enough to engage in the conversation. We are evangelical.

But as you well know, evangelism has been pushed so far to the front and been made the primary defining mission of the church to the embarrassment of and almost the exclusion of personal growth. Personal growth is really just a means to an end. You want to grow personally so that you can be a better witness, so that you can share the gospel with more people, is the

tacit attitude.

This verse is used, why? Look at it. Who is the bride? What group of people? Starts with ch. It's the church, right? The church is the bride.

So if the bride says, come, well, this is the church evangelizing. Come, partake, Jesus is the living water. This is cited, and you can see why.

It makes a kind of sense, doesn't it? The spirit and the bride say, come. Let him who hears say, come. And let him who thirsts, come.

Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. This is Revelation 22.17. Well, if you will turn in your Bible to Revelation 22, I just want to... Oh, man. This Bible.

I love this Bible. As you can see, I practically preached the cover off of it. But it's got mistakes in it.

And I don't know how it got out the door. I mean, they need to hire an editor. Of course, being an editor, I just vibrate and almost explode when I see.

But it's the Word of God, for crying out loud. You know, pay attention. Anyway, I don't know if you can see this, but it's not just at the top of the page.

It's on the page. How do you spell divine? D-E-V-I-N-E? I don't think so. But the mistakes are not just this is in some of the helps in the back.

It's divine. It's a divine presence. Is this published in Texas? Anyway, I digress.

Revelation chapter 22. Pretty much the last page in your Bible. Now, start at the beginning of the chapter.

here, the angel guide who is showing John the Apostle around the New Jerusalem in vision. Even in chapter 21, verse 22, I saw no temple in the New Jerusalem, the gates, the stones and all that have been previously described, the 12 gates, 12 pearls, each individual gate is one pearl. The street of the city was pure gold like transparent glass.

This is the New Jerusalem, the four-dimensional city of the future, the capital city of the kingdom of the Father, the place where you desperately want to be a card-carrying homeowner. There is no point to live in anywhere else but in this city. Now is when the opportunity is being extended and to the extent that we're faithful, to the extent that we're obedient, to the extent that we have that hope before us, because it's not just residence in the city, it's everything that it represents, it is proximity to the throne of God, it is proximity to the Lord Jesus Christ, it is opportunity.

If you have a job in the city, you want to live in or very near the city, right? So that your commute is short. Do you want to serve God? Do you want to reflect His glory? Do you want to be a part of

all of the future projects that He's got underway that are beyond understanding? Yes, you do. You desperately do.

And anybody who, when this kingdom is open to view, sees these things and isn't a part of it, is going to be weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth, kicking themselves. They're going to be outside the borders of this city, outside the walls, outside the gates. There's going to be nothing but hip-pocket kicking machines with people standing in front of them, pushing the button, and kicking themselves for not being inside.

We know this. We know it now. So we want to dedicate ourselves to not being on the outside, where there's nothing but boot-kicking machines in front of which we stand.

This is my metaphor for weeping and wailing and grinding of teeth. And this is going to be a lot of self-inflicted misery, self-induced misery. What was I thinking? I had all of this time, and look at the tally.

Can you imagine that there are tallying angels up there saying, OK, television, 50,327 hours. Staring out the window with a vacuous stare, 7,916 hours. Doing this, doing that, whatever it is we just honestly waste time doing.

Do you not think it's tallied? There's nothing like being a computer guy and reading logs. It horrifies me sometimes, because I go to the browser in my computer and I need to look something up. I need to find it in a search engine.

So I type it in, and search results come up, and you see something interesting. What the heck is that? And you click on it, and there's something over there. Well, what is that? And then, you know, seven or eight minutes later, I think, whoa, wait a minute, I was looking, let me back, back, back, back, back, OK, here's what I was really looking for.

Well, you do this off and on. And then, you know how you can type in a URL or something, and when you do, it shows you every place you've recently been, or you do your browser history, you say, I need to get back to that first page. And when you look at the history in the browser, it just shocks me.

I think, what's the matter with me? Look how distractible I am. Look at the list of stupid things I've gone and looked at. And, oh my gosh, you know, it's 15 minutes later, and I haven't answered my question.

Now, occasionally, these little rabbit trails, you know, yield fruit, but it's so typical of us, typical of me, at least, to waste time that could be put to better use. And, you know, there's nothing like passing the half-century mark to realize you've got less time left than you've already spent. And, you know, the finish line is approaching.

You can now see it. It used to be around the bend, over the hill. Well, now you are over the hill, and there's the finish line.

And every step you take, every second that ticks by, it's getting closer. And you think, you know, I really don't have the time to learn to play the clarinet. It would be fun.

I took a stab at it early on. I was a counselor, and there was a camper that brought one, and I thought, that's cool. I said, how do you play that thing? And he said, well, I don't know.

I've only had three lessons. And I said, well, what do they teach you? And he said, well, here's the fingers to do a scale. And I said, do you mind if I borrow that thing? And I cleaned off the reed real good, and I spent the week and taught myself the clarinet.

It was just fun. And I thought, you know, I've got to get me one of these. This is great.

It's on my list of things to do. Well, I'm starting to cross stuff off of that to-do list because there's not enough time. If I fool around spending a couple hundred hours playing the clarinet, I can't finish more important things.

All of that to say this. We look forward to this kingdom. This is the new Jerusalem.

This is the capital city. This is the brochure, okay? Would you like to live here? Would you like to be a citizen? Would you like to have an access card and they wave you right through any one of the 24 gates? Wouldn't you like to be there? Then I saw, verse 22, chapter 21, no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. Wow.

There is no temple in the kingdom of the Father because there is no distance between the people of God and God. You don't need an intermediate meeting place. You don't need a mediator anymore.

The mediation is complete. There is unity. This, by the way, is the kind of unity people ought to be pitching instead of, you know, the brotherhood of man and, you know, let's overlook each other's kinky behavior and try to, you know, be reconciled and so on.

This is the kind of unity. There is no temple. You don't need it.

You're in the presence of God. City has no need of the sun or the moon to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord illuminated it. The Lamb is the light.

When you think about it, even energy that hits the earth comes from an intermediate source. It comes from the sun. It comes from the warmth of the earth or whatever, but it comes from, and ultimately, it comes from the word that God spoke that brought the universe into existence, but life and energy come to us through these intermediate sources.

Now, there is no intermediate. You're in the direct presence of God. You're directly energized.

The nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Notice there are nations and kings outside. The millennial kingdom is sort of a model and a type for the eternal kingdom where there is still separation for people that are far away, and just as the kings of the earth will bring their glory to Jerusalem in the millennium, there are going to be kings, there are going to be rulers, there are going to be people groups.

They will be grouped by some metric, some sort of dividing quality into nations, and there will be rulers or kings, and tribute and glory will be brought in. It's of a nature and of a kind where we can only see it by analogy. Gates will not be shut at all by day.

There shall be no night there. They shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it, but there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The Lamb's Book of Life is the roster of New Jerusalem citizens, New Jerusalem house owners, land owners.

That's the Lamb's Book of Life. There are people in the eternal future who are alive and kicking and living eternal life that are not in the Lamb's Book of Life. How about that? Because you can only enter the city.

Now, guess what? In the kingdom of the Father there are also things that defile, and there are also things that cause an abomination and that cause a lie. You know how I know this? Otherwise, why is there an inspection at the gates to not allow them in? If no such thing exists, what's the point of saying nothing will enter the city? You just say, none of these exist. None of them exist inside the city.

None of them exist inside... This sort of is analogous to the seraphim who guard the throne of God and His holiness and that wall of fire that incinerates anything that gets close enough to God to threaten the sanctity and the holiness of His presence. At a distance from God there are still imperfect things. Satan can come up and talk to God, but he can't come inside the ring of the seraphim.

Same thing here in the New Jerusalem in the kingdom of the Father, very interesting. People say, well, everything will be perfection, there won't be any shadow, any cloud. Not according to this, because that's the reason there are gates.

The gates are open, but certain things can't come through those open gates. And it is things that can defile, things that can cause a lie or an abomination. And only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life can come in.

What this tells me is, because there is imperfection, because there are potential deceptions and impurities on the outside, this creates the potential for what? Defeat, learning, growth, advance.

Why would God allow these things to continue outside? Why does He allow them to continue in this life? Why do we face sin? Why do we struggle against evil? Why do we persist with a degenerate and fallen nature? Because it is an opportunity to learn. It is an opportunity to see the difference and to grow.

And apparently there is still some sort of, I don't think this is just a stasis, but there are things outside the gates. Chapter 22, He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. You notice our verse is Revelation 22.17, Spirit and bride say come, let him who hears say come, and let him who thirsts come, whoever desires, let him take of the water of life freely.

What is the invitation? What does it mean when these various speakers say come? Is this come down the aisle? Is this come to the after Christmas sale? Is this come to my block party? Is this, what does it mean? Specifically, this is an invitation to partake of the water of life. Whoever desires, let him come and take of the water of life. The invitation to come is to drink this water from the river of water of life, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

This water, clear as crystal, comes out from under a unique throne that does not yet exist. This is not the throne that Jesus sits beside at the right hand. This is the throne of God and the Lamb.

This is after the tribulation. This is after the universe has been rolled up and the elements melt with fervent heat. This is something different.

In the middle of its street, on either side of the river, is the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. For the healing of the nations.

So there are unhealed nations who are going to get healed through partaking of this water. So what is the invitation? You who are outside the city, you who are still in a place where a lie and corruption and defilement can occur, partake of this water and be healed. There's no way around it.

There's no such thing as healing if there's no such thing as a wound. There's no such thing as stopping people at the gate if there's no such thing that can be stopped. It's not a hypothetical, it's real.

There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and His servants shall serve Him. His servants are those who live in and around this beautiful, four-dimensional city. They shall see His face and His name shall be on their foreheads.

What a privilege. This is sort of the unique identifier for people who are, remember how in the Tribulation, people who take the mark of the beast, where's the mark? In the forehead and on the hand. Here the people who live in the New Jerusalem have a mark in their forehead.

What's the good thing about a mark on your forehead? Everybody can see it when they look you in the face. This is why a lot of military covers have information on them that tell you who you're dealing with. If you see scrambled eggs, you better snap too.

If you see gold on the brim, that means you're talking to somebody field grade. This is not company grade, this is not enlisted, this is not warrant officer. Scrambled eggs, you better start minding your P's and Q's and sweating because that's somebody who can have a big influence on your future.

There shall be no night there, no need for a lamp or light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. It's the second time we're told this. And they shall reign forever and ever.

Then he said to me, these words are faithful and true, and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show his servants the things which must shortly take place. Things that are going to happen, and shortly doesn't mean so much chronologically as they're going to happen fast. When they start happening, it's going to be quick.

Behold, I am coming quickly, blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. To keep is to guard, to keep in mind, to live in the light of, to be motivated by, to not forget. I John saw and heard these things, I John, we know which John, we know who John is.

When I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, see that you do not do that. This is a common mistake.

If you look at your New King James Bible, many times, especially in the Old Testament when it says angel of the Lord, they put a capital A on it. There's all this talk of the pre-incarnate Christ and so on. If he's walking around wrestling with people, that's not pre-incarnate, that's incarnate.

How can you not be incarnate if somebody can wrestle with you for hours? It's a common mistake. Even John the Apostle in the presence of this angel thinks that this must be, they so partake of the glory of the Lord that they're virtually indistinguishable from God himself. That's how holy and how reflective of God's glory these angels are.

John is going to worship. He's so grateful for this revelation. He is so thankful to God.

He is so appreciative. He is so impressed with the righteousness and the justice and the glory and the unfolding plan and purpose of God that he is ready to fall down and worship before this messenger. The angel, the messenger says, do not do that.

I am your fellow servant. I am of your brethren, the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Everyone who keeps the words of this book, meaning everyone who lives in their light, everyone who is motivated, everyone who is a narrow road, straight gate believer, shows forth the glory of God, shows forth the plan and purpose of God.

Your life will be your witness. We sing that every once in a while. Your life will be your witness.

Your life can reflect the glory of God just like this angel in fulfilling dutifully and faithfully his mission is. He said to me, do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book for the time is at hand. Everybody in the church age needs to be aware of this information and needs to be driving toward the tape, driving toward the finish line.

To be written in the Lamb's book of life is the highest privilege, one of the greatest blessings God can bestow. It is in and through the Lord Jesus Christ as we see in our study in Ephesians. He who is unjust, let him be unjust still.

He who is filthy, let him be filthy still. He who is righteous, let him be righteous still. He who is holy, let him be holy still.

These things do not so much change hearts as reveal them. You get this if you go back to the Nativity prophecies. I don't have time to go there, but you remember that the birth of John the Baptist and the rise together, that whole inception of the ministry of the Lord Jesus, his time on this earth is set for the rise and fall of many and for the revealing of hearts.

Well that's at the beginning and this is at the end of the revelation in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Behold, I am coming quickly. My reward is with me to give everyone according to his work.

The work is being recorded, it is being evaluated, and it will be either rewarded or judged. Alpha and Omega, beginning and the end, first and the last, blessed are those who do his commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life, they may enter through the gates of the city. It doesn't say those who believe, does it? Who has the right to the tree of life? Who has the right to enter the gates of the city? Read it.

Blessed are those who do his commandments, those who do his commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life. You see a little text note there, that number three down below, and it says the NU text reads wash their robes. There's not a great distance between those two concepts.

Which is it? Doesn't really matter. If you're washing your robes, what are you doing? You're doing his commandment. Wash and be clean.

That they may have the right to the tree of life may enter through the gates of the city, because most people in the eternal future don't. Which is bigger, a city or a collection of kingdoms, each with its own king? In the kingdom of the Father, there's a collection of kingdoms, each with its own king, who bring their glory to this capital city. So which is bigger? The outside, you know, the ten ring and the five ring and the two ring are much bigger than the bullseye, right? Or however many points you assign to the rings.

I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches. Are we a church? Yes.

The angel is testifying these things to us through John.

I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star, and the spirit and the bride say come, and let him who hears say come, and let him who thirsts come. Now based on the context, what is this an invitation to? Who are these things being testified to, unbelievers? What did he just say? I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things where? In the churches. These things are in and for and communicated to the church, right? So in what sense is the invitation to come inside the city and have the right to enter the city and to partake of the tree of life and live beside the river of life, in what sense is the invitation to come an invitation to unbelievers to get saved? What part of Revelation is this in? What unbeliever is going to have waded through 21.9 chapters to get to this invitation? What is the invitation? You believers in the church, take these things to heart, keep them in mind so that you can have the blessing of service, the blessing of opportunity, the blessing of residence so close to the very throne of God and of the Lamb that you can eat without somebody carrying the healing leaves out to some distant land.

You just walk down to the river and pick some and partake. That is the invitation to come. The opportunity to bask in that light that emanates from the throne.

The spirit and the bride say come. If we are the bride, are we talking to ourselves? What does it mean? We are not yet the bride. We are the body now.

We are not yet the bride. The bride is the bride at the wedding. When you're engaged, you don't say, I'd like you to meet my bride.

You say, I'd like to meet my fiancé, I'd like to meet my betrothed. Not a bride until the marriage. Marriage is not yet.

So the bride can't say anything yet. In what sense does the bride say come? What do you think? How can the bride say come? This is the future bride harking back to us across time saying, look what you can be a part of. You can be me.

You should be me. Your body. You need to be bride.

Don't be hair that gets trimmed off or something that gets left outside the gate. Be the bride. Come.

Be someone who is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. That's what this invitation means. And that's as much time as I have to cover it.

And I'm pretty much going to let that be our first session this morning. But it's so important to understand this. Don't be deflected.

Don't be deflected by culture. Don't be deflected by wrestling with flesh and blood. You know, the

war on Christmas or some goofball thing.

Christmas isn't even biblical. Why war on that? Jesus wasn't born in December. There was no Christmas trees.

There was no sleigh on the roof. There was no melting snowman. There was no glowing noses or yule logs and all the rest of the faulty rawl.

There wasn't even a manger scene. We've learned just recently we got that whole thing wrong. The little crisscross wooden box with hay hanging out of it and Jesus in there.

And, you know, the cattle are lowing. The poor baby. None of that.

Little drumming kids. None of it. None of it.

So why get caught up in a battle to keep the nativity scene on the courthouse lawn when we have such a grand calling? You are called. Here's the bride standing in the future, standing in the New Jerusalem, standing there with the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father in a place where there is no night, in a city where there is no unrighteousness, calling to us, come. That's what this invitation is.

And don't let anybody tell you different. Well, we'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we will return to Ephesians or Laodiceans chapter 3 and we're going to see how beautifully the fabric of God's Word blends and intertwines.

These threads, the warp and the woof, are so consistent. This very same message that we've seen in Revelation 22 is in this discussion that Paul has in Ephesians chapter 3, which we also find in Colossians chapter 1, which we also find in the book of Hebrews, and I am more and more convinced that Hebrews came directly out of the heart and mind of the Apostle Paul. But we'll see that when we come back.