

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
All Saints Day
November 2, 2025
Sermon by Pastor Gary A. Pufahl
Jesus is beaming over you!

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And the sea no longer existed. ² And I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And from the throne I heard a loud voice that said, “Look! God’s dwelling is with people. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, because the former things have passed away.” ⁵ The one who was seated on the throne said to me, “Look, I am making everything new!” He also said, “Write, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ And he said to me: It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To anyone who is thirsty, I will give freely from the spring of the water of life.

—Revelation 21:1-6 EHV

In the words of our text for today, there’s a small sentence that I think packs quite a punch. “[**God**] **will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**” It’s not that God will wipe away tears that are shed in heaven. There won’t be tears in heaven, at least, not tears of sorrow. No, he’s talking about every tear that we shed down here on earth.

As one of your pastors, I have seen more than a few of you cry, but that doesn’t make me an expert in everything that makes you sad or scared. So, I’m not going to pretend to know all your tears. I’m not going to pretend I know what you go through when the tears start streaming down your face. But God knows what you are going through. He’s keeping track of them so that when the day comes, he can wipe every single one of them away for good.

I’m sure John had his fair share of tears streaming down his face. He needed stamina to keep going through this life. When John wrote these words from Revelation, it was approximately 100 A.D. It’s been about 70 years since John last saw Jesus. When he last saw Jesus, Jesus was lifting his hands and blessing them. Then he ascended into heaven. But in the meantime, that blessing seems to have faded. Many of the Christian churches in the Mediterranean world were withering. Some from persecution on the outside. Some from self-destruction on the inside. You think about all the apostles that followed Jesus. John was among them: Peter, James, Paul. And all of them were killed on account of Jesus. John’s the only one left, and he’s stuck on the island of Patmos. He’s exiled. He hasn’t died for Jesus, but maybe being exiled is worse. John can only look across the sea, and it seems as though the Christian church was crumbling all around him. All he can do is watch.

Here’s the twist though. On one Sunday, God comes to him in a vision, and God says to John, “All I want you to do is watch. Watch what I show you and write it down.” And what John saw he wrote down in the book of Revelation. The book is basically scene after scene of attacks against the Christian church. All sorts of different attacks. Persecution from the outside, moral and doctrinal decay on the inside. But at the end of every single one of those scenes, when the dust settles, the church is still standing.

Now in the last two chapters of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, the very last chapters of the Bible, this is where God shows John what’s on the other side of the finish line. He says, “Write this down because you’re not the only one who needs it.” He gives John a vision of what is coming so that he gives John and us the stamina to keep going until we get there. He gives John a glimpse of heaven.

Now one of the things we need to realize about God telling us about heaven is that he doesn’t go into a lot of detail about what heaven will be like. He describes it like this: “**Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And the sea no longer existed.**” Everything that is now broken and corrupted by sin will be restored to perfection. And that’s about it as far as details go. Look for this when you read your Bible. When God talks about heaven, there’s a lot less focus on what it’s going to look like and a whole lot more focus on who’s going to be there. And that’s what is here too.

So, John looks up from the new heaven and new earth, and he sees the New Jerusalem coming down into it. But do you notice how he describes it? He pictures a wedding. Maybe you can picture this as well. I know I can.

July 28, 2001, was one of the greatest days of my life. I was beaming with joy and delight as I stood in the front of church. Tears started to well up in my eyes as I caught a glimpse of the most beautiful woman in the world. She was holding on to the arm of her father as they made their way down the aisle toward me. I couldn’t believe this was happening. She looked absolutely glorious with her beautiful white dress. As she walked closer to my side, my heart beat with joy and delight. That woman was my wife, and I was her husband. I was just beaming.

Picture that in this vision. **Jesus is beaming over you.** He's describing a wedding. How does he put it? **"And I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."** The bride is arriving for the ceremony. The bride is the church. The groom is already there waiting for the bride. The groom is God.

And there's this loud proclamation that happens at this ceremony. **"And from the throne I heard a loud voice that said, 'Look! God's dwelling is with people. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, because the former things have passed away.'"**

It's a bride and her groom on their wedding day. The honeymoon's never going to be over. She's never going to leave him. He's never going to let her down. He'll wipe away every tear from her eyes, and she'll never have a reason to cry again.

Can you understand why this is what John needed to see? He needed to see this so that when he looks around earth and all he sees is the church withering and wickedness winning, he can know that it's not going to be like this forever. The new heaven and new earth that he sees in the future will one day be the present reality. And God makes it clear that this isn't wishful thinking. This is 100% certainty.

Notice how God makes it known that this is certain. **"The one who was seated on the throne said to me, 'Look, I am making everything new!' He also said, 'Write, for these words are trustworthy and true.' ⁶And he said to me: It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To anyone who is thirsty, I will give freely from the spring of the water of life."**

It's good for us to look past the finish line. It's good for us to see what is waiting for us when we cross it. God is encouraging us to keep pressing on with your eyes on the prize. But that's not the only reason that John needed to see this. It wasn't only so that he could keep his focus on the future. What John saw also opened up his eyes to the present.

God calls himself **"The Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End."** The Lord Almighty who created all things and controls all things is not just waiting on the other side of the finish line. He's not just talking about the future. Sure, that bride and groom relationship will enter into a new and final phase in heaven. But it's not just the future. It's the present. The inhabitants of heaven, their relationship is already that way now. How can we understand this?

Well, maybe think of all the things that make you cry. What are the things that just cause the flood waters to open or the things that you wish you could cry over but you just can't because the tears don't come. Is it something like guilt or addiction? And when you look at yourself in the mirror you don't see a beautiful bride. In fact, maybe you wonder how God could love you when you can't even stand yourself.

But God doesn't just say that you *will* be his bride in heaven. He says you are that right now. The apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 5, **"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, by cleansing her with the washing of water in connection with the Word.** (That's baptism.) **He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, having no stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she would be holy and blameless."**

You were washed in baptism. Essentially, your baptism is like your wedding day to Jesus. Have you ever seen a little child being baptized? Many times, the child, both boys and girls, are dressed in a little gown, a baptismal gown. Do you know what that signifies? It was thought to be a mini-wedding dress. Christ cleanses us with the washing of water in connection with the Word. Baptism. Baptism is like our spiritual wedding day with Jesus.

And Jesus is beaming over you. You may look at yourself and be disappointed and think about all the things that you need to do before God will love you. But when God looks at you right now, that's not what he sees. He sees you clothed in Jesus' forgiveness like a beautiful bride. You are perfect to him. **And he is beaming over you.**

Or maybe the things that cause you to cry are things more like loneliness. You spend most of your days by yourself. Or maybe you're surrounded by people all day long, but nobody knows you or understands you, so they might as well be millions of miles away. God loves you and knows you, no less than he knows and loves Jesus because it was Jesus' blood that brought you into the family. So, even if you don't have a friend in the world, and nobody cares about you, you have a friend in Jesus.

Or maybe it's anxiety that makes the tears flow. You are always coming up in your mind with all the things that could go wrong. Or maybe it's reality. And you are looking at your life at all the things that have gone wrong, and it seems as though God is just letting everything spiral out of control. And you're caught up in the storm. But God doesn't just say that he's God. He says that he's *your* God. *Your* God, your very own. And he's already saying right now what you'll see in heaven. It's one of his favorite statements in the Bible. Already right now he is saying, **"I am**

with you.” He doesn’t just tell you, “I’m waiting for you on the other side. Good luck until you get there.” No. “I am with you. You’re my bride. I’m your groom. You’re my child. I’m your Father. I will not leave you. I forgive you. I love you. I treasure you. I’m with you. **I’m beaming over you.”**

What John sees is not just about what’s coming. It’s about what’s now. Sure, that doesn’t take away all the tears. Not yet. Instead, it shows you where your stamina comes from. Not in yourself, but in your God.

And then when the day comes when God carries his bride over the threshold of the finish line and you’re there and you see the great multitude that no one can’t count from every people and language, you’re not going to just be some faceless person in the crowd to God. You’ll be what you are right now. His bride. His child. His treasure. And you can picture God in heaven. You can picture God walking straight up to you, just to you, wiping the tears from your eyes. And you can picture God saying to you, saying just to you, “You know, I saw every one of those tears roll down your cheeks because I was always with you. And every single one of them served my gracious purpose for your good to bring you here to me.” And then those tears will have served their purpose. And God will wipe away every tear from your eyes for good as **he beams over you forever.** Amen.