

“For Good: For the World”

By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison

May 21, 2017

Revelation 22:1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light.

And they will reign for ever and ever.

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the **city**.*

I described the Biblical meaning of “the city” last week. After Cain killed his brother Abel, he built the 1st city named in the Bible. The 2nd city is built a few chapters later, Babylon. It was built with arrogance. It stood in opposition to God. The “City of David” (Jerusalem) had some great events (Temple worship) but was also the site of David’s adultery and murder. Child sacrifice happened nearby in the Valley of Hinnom (Greek = “Gehenna”). The City mocked and refused to listen to the great prophets. Jesus wept over and was crucified in the city. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC by the Babylonians and in 70 AD by the Romans. The city-lovers are seen as inhabitants who murder their brothers, are arrogant towards God and who crucify Christ. In Revelation 18 (v2) the City of Babylon falls. “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!” That seems like poetic justice. The enormous surprise and great reversal at the very end of the Bible is that HEAVEN is in the form of a city. The holy city is the New Jerusalem (21:5). The city is the most unlikely model for heaven!

On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing 12 crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. Water and fruit are in abundance. Our lives have flow. We ripen and mature like fruit. These are images of what Christ does in our lives. It’s a maturing process of discipleship.

*And the leaves of the tree are **for the healing of the nations**.* Not only do individuals and families need healing, but so do entire nations. It was true of America after the Civil War, + the European nations after World War I and II, and Iraq and what will need to happen when the war in Syria finally ends.

³ *No longer will there be any curse.* I read this week that King Pele of Hawaii many years ago pronounced a curse on anyone who had stolen lava from The Big Island. One man who had pilfered some of the rock and when he returned to the US mainland his son started having behavioral issues, his wife divorced him and his mother died. So, he sent the lava back to Hawaii because he wanted the curse to be removed. He said that after he returned it, everything improved in his life. The interesting part of the story is that the Park Rangers made up the story in the 1940's because they were concerned that so much lava was being stolen. The King Pele curse story is totally bogus. The Park Rangers think the story is absurd but they also have to deal with all of the returned lava. It's created an administrative nightmare for them. The idea of a curse goes back to Genesis 4. If you were here last week you will remember the story of Cain being under God's curse for murdering his brother, Abel. From Genesis to Revelation, there is the sense of people living under the curse. We don't get rid of the curse by returning lava rock or by making amends in some other fashion, the curse will only be removed when the Lamb of God returns.

*The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in **the city**, and **his servants will serve him**.* Service evidently doesn't end on earth. We're going to serve, in the city – the new city.

⁴ *They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.*⁵ *There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

Darkness is seldom our friend. Genesis tells us the story of the creation of the heavens & the earth. Now God will create a NEW heaven and a new earth. Sin ruined the former, but God's going to make something brand new.

Last week, we spoke about being "For the City," and now "For the World." It's not either/or, but both/and. Likewise, we're not just taking care of ME (the Protestant trap) but participating in the worldwide mission of the church. A local church gives us the opportunity to do both. Much wider scope because of the Body of Christ.

We have a statue of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley. Our statue has plaques of 8 Wesley quotes. Maybe his most famous one was: "**The World is My Parish.**" Yet, the terminology may be confusing because we don't use the term, "parish." When we hear the word we think of "perish" as in to die" A "parish" was the way they defined a local church's area. Wesley was willing to go all over, not just his parish or his City, but the entire world, to reach people for Christ. One of the great temptations of the church is to reverse this saying and make it: "My Parish is my world." The local church dies when it becomes inwardly focused.

Application:

This is an attitude. Perspective: see ourselves as global citizens. Think abundantly, not with scarcity. Surplus instead of deficit. Generosity. Be thankful. Grateful.

We want to Help Others Follow Jesus. Why? Because we believe following Jesus = the key to life. Life abundant in this life, and life eternal. This is truly a win-win. We are on mission to share this with the whole world. Volunteer. Be involved. Give your money. Give your time. Give your heart. Acts 1:8
But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Jerusalem (local): Tulsa is part of the world, too. Judea (region), Samaria (enemies) end of the earth (worldwide)

What can I do? How does this apply to me? The church is all over the world – we are united. We need to be strong for us and for them. We are all working for good. **KINSHIP Network.** Contact Jim Davis jdavis@asburytulsa.org if you're interested in going to Lebanon.

I repeat, the church is all over the world – we are united. Importance of personal relationships in international ministries. **ESTONIA (Rebone - picture)**

Tidings – Feb. 2017 Isley Steger (& Heather)

Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith & your purity. 1 Tim 4:12 Yes, I am young. I'm an 11-year old 6th grade girl @ Oliver Middle School. I'm too young to have a real job but my current job is as important as any career. My job is to spread God's love to people who don't know Jesus. Mark Fowler (Student Ministry Coordinator) tells us every week that "middle schoolers can change the world." In fact, he believes this so much that at our middle school retreat he gave each of a \$1 bill with those words written on it. I still have mine & that's exactly what I did. That's exactly what I'm doing. I'm changing the world by Helping Others Follow Jesus. I didn't know that I was changing the world but now I know I am. In the spring of 2014, my mom received a phone call from one of her friends who worked in the children's ministry at Asbury. Her friend was approached by the missions team to join a group of people going to Estonia to help with VBS. She thought my mom & I would be great additions to this team. After talking it over with my dad and praying about it, my mom & said Yes! We were on our way to Estonia and I was on my way to change the world. Since then, I've been back to Estonia one other time. My love for Estonia has grown since the summer of 2014. I now have friends who live there. I pray for them daily. I think about Estonia often and can't wait to return. My entire family went to Estonia this past July. My mom led the team. She was asked to lead the 2017 team, too. I wanted to go back with her. My mom told me if God wanted me to go, He'd let me know. My parents also told that if I was serious about going I'd have to pay for part of this trip. Wait!! What!?!? How am I going to raise money? I have no job and I'm too young to start working. At school the next day, I started a list of ways to earn money: walking dogs, mowing yards, card making,

selling some of my stuff and garage sales were some of my top choices. That night I thought I'd first try card-making. My Nana makes cards for fun and has given me some supplies & has shown me how to make them. I also called a card-making friend of mine, Kim Broadhurst, to ask her to help me get started. I spent an afternoon with her making cards & talking about Estonia. Kim suggested to my mom that we should post a video on Facebook about my card-making business and see if anyone would want to buy a card or two. So we did. Within minutes of posting my video I had my first order, and it was for three cards. Then here came another order for two more cards and then another for nine. It was crazy. Within 24 hours I had more than 30 orders placed, and I was busy making 80-plus cards! I remember looking at my mom and saying, "I guess God really wants me to go back to Estonia." Over the last month I've posted a 2nd video on my mom's Facebook page and have made several hundred more cards. My cards have been sent all over the US. I've had people my mom barely knows buy my cards. It's awesome to see God working through my little business. All the money I've earned has been given to Asbury for my mission trip. I have a long way to go to make my goal but I know God will get me there. See, middle schoolers can change the world. It doesn't matter how young or old you are, or how important your job is; God can use YOU to change the world. (She's not only paid for her trip but paid for her mom's trip & for another friend's trip & is saving for next year's trip, too)

They are on Instagram and can be found at this link:

<https://www.instagram.com/isleyscards/>

1NATION1ONE DAY – Over 50 short-term missionaries from Asbury and NE Oklahoma in late July will go to Nicaragua. We will join 2,500 other missionaries to take the gospel message of hope and healing to all 17 states. There is still time to be a part of 1Nation1Day's call to action. To Do Good, For the World; contact Marilene Long in our Outreach Ministry. mlong@asburytulsa.org

The World is my parish – but the world has come to Tulsa. We have an **INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP** at Asbury. If you have not yet connected with the Asbury International Fellowship, please make direct contact with Pastor Dick Read. His email address is rdread@asburytulsa.org

Everybody can use their gifts somewhere for someone (whether international, national, regional, in the City, or in our church) **VOLUNTEER VIDEO**

To follow Jesus is to serve. It begins in our worship service. But we also serve in our church, city, State and world. In Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of earth. Asbury can help you be part of something bigger than just ourselves. Be more than a taker – be a giver.

James 1:22 *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*