

One command! Adam and Eve had one command! Don't eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Our first parents couldn't keep one command! Because of that paradise was lost and they would experience death, pain and sorrow. What could have possibly made this an even greater tragedy? Eating from another tree, the Tree of Life. That would have trapped them forever in their hopeless condition.

To protect them from themselves, God banished them from the Garden and used an armed angel guard to block their way to the tree.

Chalk one up for Satan. His goal of ruining God's perfect world was accomplished. Now his goal to prowl around and convince believers to spend an eternity with him in hell.

Today is Saints Triumphant. That's when remember the saints, the faithful believers from our congregation, who were called out of this world since last November. They're now triumphant residents of a heavenly mansion prepared for those who confess their sin and turn to Jesus for pardon.

Adam and Eve weren't allowed to eat from the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. But our Revelation lesson gives us this breaking news: **“Now We Can Eat from the Tree of Life.”** That news comforts the faithful: *We don't receive what we deserve*, while warning the unrepentant: *This message is not to be changed.*

As Jesus finishes up his revelation to the Apostle John, he tells us about bringing this world to the finish line: **“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”**

Alpha and Omega - on the front panel of our baptismal font – are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Jesus identifies himself as the

eternal and changeless God who'll return as promised and reward each person according to what they have done.

I know what you're thinking. “Yes, we are saved by faith, not by works!” Jesus isn't contradicting that, he's simply pointing out, like he does in other passages of Scripture, that since faith without works is dead, our good works demonstrate the faith living in our hearts.

Jesus leaves no doubt about that: **“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”** We're going to be judged, but it isn't based on what we did or didn't do. It's because of the spotless clothes Jesus gives us to wear. It's what Jesus did for us that allows us walk through the pearly gates and Eat from the Tree of Life.

We have such a loving and forgiving God, don't we? That means everyone receives this ultimate blessing, right? Sadly, no. It's not because God doesn't want it to happen. It's because people defend their sinfulness and deny there's anything wrong with them. Jesus gives a detailed list of those who will not be dining at the Tree of Life: **“Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”**

For the Jews "dogs" were Gentiles, those excluded from God's chosen people then. Those whose life repeatedly opposes God's will are excluded from God's chosen people believers - now.

- Those who practice magic arts by trying to take control of things by themselves and making God do what they want.
- The sexually immoral are those who are sexually active before marriage or unfaithful while married.
- The murderers are those who have hatred in their hearts.

- And idolaters are those who refuse to give the top spot to God.
- Liars love hearing and spreading lies.

If we're honest with ourselves, we've fallen into those categories too many times to count. That's why the thought of the mighty Lord returning with his holy angels to judge the living and the dead is terrifying. He's coming to pay us what we deserve and have earned.

God describes our paycheck: "**The wages of sin is death.**" This death isn't the separation of your soul from your body in physical death. This separation is from God forever in hell. That's eternal death.

If that's what happened to our loved ones who died this past year, then today is no celebration, it's for mourning in desperation. If that's what we can expect, then we might as well shut it down right now, go home and try to find as much happiness and fun now because what's coming is worse than dreadful.

But God's offer that "**Now We Can Eat from the Tree of Life,**" lets us know we don't receive what we deserve. How's that possible? Let our Savior explain: "**I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.**"

Again, Jesus identifies himself. Here's he's encouraging churches and congregations like ours to receive Revelation as his Word. He's the **Root and the Offspring of David**. As the Root, he's David's Creator. As the Offspring, he's also David's descendant. He's God. He's man. He's the God-man!

The sun announces a new day, the same way that Jesus, the Morning Star, promises a new heaven and a new earth where **We Can Eat from the Tree of Life**. For all of us who rely on Jesus as our Savior, we live with the certainty of that day when we'll be with our Savior in glory. That's what our loved ones who died trusting in Jesus as their Savior are experiencing right now.

John writes: **The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.** The Holy Spirit and the bride, believers, both extend an invitation to leave sin and come to Jesus. None are excluded from this invitation, because the gospel of Jesus excludes no one. Anyone can drink from the water of life and eat from the Tree of Life. It's free. It was paid for by Jesus.

Those not in heaven have excluded themselves by refusing to hear God's Word and believe in him.

Those of us who do hear it are to get the message out. Use our Christmas services on December 23,24,25 as a perfect time to invite.

The promises Revelation are critical to the soul's eternal home. But there's also the warning not to change the message: **If anyone adds anything to the words of the scroll, or takes words away from this scroll ... You won't be able to eat from the Tree of Life.**

This warning applies to how we handle the Bible. Today it's common for Christian churches to twist, change and toss aside the Bible.

With Christmas approaching, don't be surprised to hear how the birth of Jesus was a cute fairy tale. Or, how the Bible contradicts itself. It's amazing how quickly people are willing to believe that because some scholar arrived at his own conclusion.

Let me give you an example of what may appear as a contradiction. True or False: *God loves all people*. True. John 3:16 - **God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son**. True or False: *God hates all who do wrong*. True again. Psalm 5:5 - **You hate all who do wrong**.

God loves all. God hates all. That's a contradiction, isn't it? How do we handle it? You've heard it handled this way: "*God hates the sin, but loves the sinner.*" That's not what the Bible says. God hates the sinner and God loves the sinner is what the Bible

teaches. How do we solve what appears to be a contradiction?

The solution is found in the cross of Jesus. God would rather substitute his only Son than damn sinners. That's love for sinners! God would rather damn his only Son than sinners. His hatred for sinners caused him to punish his Son. On our Savior's cross we see both God's love and God's hatred for sinners.

That's a message we want to share. That's a message that brings comfort as our loved ones are remembered who died trusting in Jesus. Because Now, **They Can Eat from the Tree of Life.** And one day we will too.