Rev. 22:14-15 14Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the Tree of Life and so that they may enter through the gates into the city. 15Outside are the dogs, that is, the sorcerers, the adulterers, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

 Before we speak to the words that I have highlighted for you today, let’s you and I just do a kind of Christian “gut” check. Do you believe in Jesus? That is a straight forward question. Now, I did not ask if you believe in “your” Jesus. I want to know if you believe in Jesus as Jesus and God’s Word reveals him? That is an important question. Here is why. (My apologies if I have used this illustration before.)

 If I were to tell you that I was a “bowler” what does that mean to you? Now, if I were to tell you that I love bowling but there are a few things about the game I wrestle with and I proceed to say things like: “For instance, the pads to me hinder good bowling. I don’t understand why we need the sticks, rather expensive sticks in playing because the sticks seem to break easily on the ball as you attempt to shoot it to the goal. And to have to put the ball through the net before it hits the pins just seems silly. But other than that, I love bowling!”

 What are your thoughts? I guarantee there is not a sane person here who did not think, “You are not talking about bowling. I don’t know what you are talking about but it is not bowling!” That’s just the thing. As I was talking you might have understood that I was confusing several games, legitimate games, but that didn’t matter. What you grasped is that I was not talking about bowling, at least bowling as everyone else in the world knows it. Now if you recognize a made up, false game then if you are going to call yourself a Christian shouldn’t you be able to recognize a made up, false god when you hear about it? Because the minute that you change, alter, reject or twist the known truth of Jesus, you are no longer talking about and putting your faith in the real Jesus! So back to my question, “Do you believe in Jesus?”

 You did note what Jesus said about himself this morning in our text right? He said, **“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End…I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star…Let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who wants the water of life take it as a gift.”**

 Do you catch the gravity of those words? We could add a whole bunch more phrases to the revelation of Jesus. **“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life…I am the Son of God…I am the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, the Gate, the True Vine, the Word, the Light of the world, I am the Good Shepherd.”** Here is my point. If we take just all of these pronouncements of Jesus concerning himself you have to make one of two possible conclusions: Jesus is what he says he is or Jesus is merely a mentally handicapped person who spewed a lot of garbage and no one should ever believe in him or any religion based on him. Because it is clear that Jesus considered himself God, Lord of all, the revealer of Truth, the very power of God in human form, the Savior of the world. There is no middle ground. Either you believe what Jesus has said and revealed in His Word about God or you do not believe. No middle ground. Just like I would not be a legitimate bowling coach if I try to teach you to put on football pads, use hockey sticks, basketball nets and other silly notions. It is either the true Jesus or it is not!

 Yet I am amazed at how many people try to bend and twist the truth of Jesus and God, and they want you to accept their confession of this mixed up, messed up faith as legitimate and true. Take, for instance, all those who want to say that “the God of love would never send anyone to hell.” Is that what God’s Word says? Is that what Jesus says? Let’s look and see as we contemplate our words today under the theme: **BLESSED OR NOT?**

 Listen again to what our text said: **“Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the Tree of Life and so that they may enter through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, that is, the sorcerers, the adulterers, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”** Those are some pretty awesome words from Jesus. It is clear that Jesus is talking about heaven and eternal life. It is clear that the gates are the gates of the New Jerusalem, those giant pearly gates we are told about and that provide entrance into that place where God and man will live together in perfect and holy harmony. Remember, these are the words of Jesus. Every word of Scripture is from and of Jesus, given by the Holy Spirit who does nothing but testify to and of Jesus. You can’t say Jesus is God and then reject and ignore any portion of God’s Word because Jesus says he is the Truth and the Word. So let’s continue by looking at that second group first. That group that Jesus describes as “dogs.”

 Please take note of why these people outside of the gates are called dogs. Jesus is not trying to put down the idea of dogs as pets or even dogs as great companions and workers for mankind. Yet Jesus’ words clearly are referencing a truth about dogs, specifically the fact that dogs are animals. As animals they do not think and reason as man does, but rather operate only from instinct and animal drives. We could probably go through a list of the gross things that all animals do but the issue here is just to grasp that Jesus has equated the unbelieving world with instinct driven, animal based behaviors that will keep them outside of the eternal life and wonder of heaven. That is the point of these words!

 Then recognize that Jesus choses, as God, to reveal some of the lives of these animals as specifically destructive things to mankind. That’s why Jesus speaks as he does and note at the end how he summarizes what is true of every unbeliever there is: **“everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”** This list is speaking of those who love and practice falsehood. Those who are rejecters of the Truth, who abandon the Way, who reject the Life…who do not and will not believe in Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the world.

 I would be remiss if I did not at least highlight, as Jesus did, those things that clearly he considered to be the horror of unbelievers. The words I think are very telling. First is “sorcerers.” The word here is the Greek word we get our word “pharmacist” from but in this case the person of Jesus’ day mixed drugs for the purpose of magic and or sorcery. What you realize is that this group purposely works to lead away from God and promote the dark arts based on the evil of Satan and his world. God’s Word has always condemned such practices as wickedness. Next is “adulterers”, yep, that is the word we get our word pornography from. The people who want and practice sex their way, anyway, contrary to God’s way and they want you to do the same. I am deeply saddened by how many of our Christian children get swept up in this worldly way of sex and so deeply scar their souls maybe to eternal death. He speaks of “murderers.” Those who kill humans and in many cases delight in it. I think the abortionist the very epitome of what this word is about. Our world wants the right to kill babies! A few states have even passed laws allowing that murder outside of the womb, just because. Isn’t that horribly sad! Lastly, Jesus highlights those who are “idolaters.” Those who follow and chase after false gods and false ways of faith. How do you know it is false? Compare it to God’s Word. Compare it to what Jesus is truly and really about. Simple as that.

 Again I think Jesus highlighted those particular sins and practices of mankind because He considers them the most devastating and destructive of sins to our souls. As I said, Jesus really wants us to grasp that the love and practice of falsehood is enough to keep you out of the city, out of his heavenly kingdom and eternal life. Do not blame God because the world rejects and ignores his Word of truth.

 Then there is the beginning phrase that Jesus used. Wonderful, uplifting and hope filled words of faith and salvation. He said, **“Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the Tree of Life and so that they may enter through the gates into the city.”** I hope you are not puzzled by these words, because in truth they are focusing on the wonder of Jesus and salvation.

 Jesus tells us that there are those who are blessed, they have the grace, love and mercy of God in their lives. Did you catch why they have this? It is because they have washed their robes. Since we let Scripture interpret Scripture, we do understand what this is referring to. It is the very same wording found in Rev. 7 and the great multitude before the throne of God. It is a picture of the faithful, those who are believers in Jesus and what Jesus has done and accomplished.

 So yes, they are washed, washed in the blood of the Lamb! They are considered by God to be holy and pure. They are not holy and pure because of what they have done, but rather because of what Jesus has done. How else can robes be washed in blood and come our gloriously white? It is because of the forgiveness of sins, the grace and mercy of Jesus. Jesus went to the cross to die for sin. Jesus paid the price for our salvation and because of Jesus and His victory we are counted before God as righteous, holy and pure, without sin: we are God’s children and heirs of his kingdom. All of this in Jesus, by faith in Jesus.

 The picture here says more. Those who are blessed because they have washed their robes are also given access to **“the Tree of Life.”** Again that beautiful picture is a reference to what is spoken of at the beginning of our chapter. Verses 1-2 say, **“The angel showed me the river of the water of life, which was as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. In the middle of the city’s street on each side of the river was a tree of life that yielded twelve kinds of fruit. The tree yields its fruit every month, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.”** There is the tree. The blessed has access to and may eat abundantly of this tree. It is in the middle of God’s kingdom, straddling that river of the water of life coming from the throne of God. My impression is that this tree is huge and wonderful, big enough for all the souls of heaven to partake of its blessings.

 Is it an actual tree? I don’t know. What I do know is that this tree and the river of the water of life are clearly symbolic of Jesus and his marvel. Jesus is the heart and core of everything that God promises and gives. In other words, Jesus will be the supplier of every good and needful thing for us in heaven.

 You realize that we then have access to the city of God. That is God’s way of picturing that we will live with him forever and ever. Our mansion is in his presence. Our glory is found in his glory. I tell you, you can study this and every section of God’s Word that tells us about heaven and its eternal wonder and you will never find a reason for not wanting to be there.

 But do recognize that there are those who won’t be there. They are outside of the city, outside of the scope of the grace and love of God. They are outside because they have rejected the wonder and marvel of Jesus and what He has done. Just so you know, at the end of chapter 21 we have similar words: **“I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God has given it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. There is no day when its gates will be shut, for there will be no night in that place. They will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. Nothing that is unclean and no one who does what is detestable or who tells lies will ever enter it, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”**

 Back to my original question, “Do you believe in Jesus?” Do you trust and accept that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God who gave his life for you and who will grant you forgiveness and thus eternal life and salvation? Is He your God and Lord? Are you living his way or yours? Are you putting him first in all things or is he like second, third or fourth place in your life? Is He your hope and comfort, your sure salvation and foundation or do you just kind of play around with the idea of Jesus hoping that if He is the True God you can claim he was somewhat important to you!

 As you can see in these words, Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. He is. And He is worthy of all praise, glory and honor for offering each of us the chance to wash our robes and be a part of his eternal kingdom. Thank you Jesus. Keep my heart and soul faithful to you and what you are…our everything! Amen.