Nov. 27, 2016
Lesson 13
Alpha and Omega: Revelation 22: 12-21

Context:
This is the closing chapter of the Book of Revelation. After telling all of the visions and revelations over time, our author comes to close the scroll with words of caution and encouragement.

As with any closing to a letter, the author wants the readers to remember a main theme. The reason for this letter is because of their belief in Jesus Christ that unites all of them. Because of Jesus, all of them have abundant life. Thus, we hear the Greek letters Alpha and Omega as representative of everything Jesus stands for; everything is through him and because of him. He is the beginning and the end.

Because of that, those who follow Christ are changed to be different in the world. The counsel given to them is to keep living in a way that they may be Jesus' truest disciples: watching themselves so that they continue to be honest, respectful, and humble people. That is how they may bear fruit in their own lives. Everything they do comes from the transformation of following Jesus.

To close the letter, the author cautions the people to watch out for things added to the scroll and those who may use the words to add their own prophecies or agendas.

Most importantly, the book continues the promise that Christ will come again and that the grace of the Lord is to be with all the people.

Application:
My favorite scripture out of this section is the verse: “I am the alpha and omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” In today’s world there are so many things that trump our belief that Christ is our Lord: politicians, celebrities, social clubs, consumerism, and so many other things capture our hearts and minds. We saw in the election this past season when we saw the debates and the candidates spar back and forth. We see in the focus on negative news stories where people intentionally hurt or go after others.

In the United States, we especially see the different lords of the world appear during the season of Christmas. To-do list grow and sometimes even the nicest of people transform into grinches as the season approaches. There is a rush to the stores, family fights that comes to a head, and the endless list of things that most be done before Christmas arrives. And in the midst of everything, there can even be sadness as we observe old memories of better times and maybe even think of the loved ones we have lost in the year. The season almost becomes too hard to think about them without them being present.

Today is the first Sunday in Advent, the Sunday in the liturgical year where we begin to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. Growing up, this was one of my favorite seasons of the Christian calendar as we would look to the Advent wreath as a way to lead us through the season. For both corporate worship and family dinner on Sunday, we would have an Advent wreath where we would observe the season.
The first Sunday of Advent is where we light the Candle of Hope. It is with hope that we as a people of faith move and breathe, even when we face dark times. We are also reminded that through all times and all things that Jesus Christ is our hope who never abandons us. Because of him we have the courage to face life and go even when there are punches.