Our nation anthem has an interesting history. The British were attacking Baltimore after burning Washington DC during the War of 1812. Mighty warships from the British navy pounded Fort McHenry for 28 hours as it tried to guard the entrance to Baltimore. Throughout the night the large stars and strips flag continued to y proudly, lit up with the rockets red glare. Then by the dawn’s early light the flag was still there providing hope for the American people. Francis Scott Key was so moved by the sight of the flag in the dawn’s early light that he wrote the words for a poem that became our national anthem.

Christians know what it is like to be bombarded by enemies. We lose a spouse or a child in death and live each day mindful of that loss. We look at the next election, and wonder if our supreme court will soon be ultra liberal, our government socialist, and Christians attacked by a government that will tell them what they can and cannot believe. We have children or grandchildren who have turned their backs on Jesus. We have lingering health issues that plague us on a daily basis. The world is not getting to be an easier place to live your Christian life. Some days life gets rather ugly. But then we lift our eyes. We look up and see something shining brightly in the sky. It is the Morningstar that indicates a new day is dawning. Jesus tells us that he is our Morningstar. So Let’s Look to the Morningstar To Brighten Our Day!

Martin Luther once said, “The Christian is always an optimist.” With the dawning of each new day comes the very real hope and certainty that Jesus’ goodness and mercy will be the same for us today as it was yesterday. With the dawning of each new day comes the very real optimistic hope that this could be the day Jesus returns to take us home. In the most trying circumstances of life Christians will rally around each other and encourage each by saying, “Maybe you will not have to even face this problem tomorrow because the Lord will return on clouds of glory tonight.”

Are you ready to meet King Jesus when he comes in clouds of glory? King Jesus is coming with glory and he will bring a reward, the reward of living forever in a new heaven and new earth. So who is Jesus going to take along with him when he comes?

We are approaching the end of the school year when students receive their awards and their recognition for what the accomplished this past year. The student who graduates at the top of the class receives the title of “Summa cum laude” which means, “with the highest praise.” If you want to eat from the tree of life and live forever in the place Jesus has prepared for us, then you need to do more than be the best in the class. You will need perfect scores on every test, “A” pluses in every assignment. That is God’s standard for eternal life. He will judge us on our works, but these works must be perfect as Jesus said, “Be perfect as you Father in heaven is perfect.” That is an impossible task. That is why Romans 3 makes the bold, sweeping statement that condemns all of humanity, “There is none who does good, no not one.”

What hope is there of a reward for us when Jesus returns? In ourselves, none! Our hope lies in that bright Morningstar Jesus Christ. And what he has done to rescue us. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega. Alpha is the first letter in the Greek language and Omega, the last letter in the Greek alphabet. Jesus is the eternal changeless God. He was around before the world began. In addition, He is the root of King David. He is the creator, life source for King David. At the same time, he is the offspring of King David. Jesus became one of us with real skin, hair, bones and human flesh. He had to sleep, and eat, and even learn lessons as a child. He was also tempted as we are tempted, but he
never sinned. When he died on the cross, he suffered real pain as he died for our sins.

Who does Jesus want to take along with him on this eternal journey? Who does Jesus want to wash and make clean? Listen to verse 17. “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come’ and let all who hear say, ‘Come.’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come and; whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.” We are reminded of a similar invitation in Isaiah 55 where the Lord says, “Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come buy and eat.” Our Morningstar offers hope to the whole world in this gracious invitation to take the free gift of the water of life. The forgiveness of sins and the beautiful white robe of Jesus’ righteousness cost you nothing. Can’t you see the open arms of Jesus reaching out to you and the world with the words: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Perhaps a story about a loving mother will help us realize even more how much Jesus wants us in his loving arms now so he can take us home to the place he has prepared for us. The St. Louis Zoo had just opened up a section called “The Big Cat Country.” Tigers and lions are allowed to come out of their cages and roam around in large enclosures. Visitors can observe them from an elevated skyway above their habitat. A mother with small children was walking up to one of the skyways when a blanket got caught in the wheel of the stroller. She knelt down to untangle it. Her two sons, five and three, ran ahead. When she looked up she saw that boys had gone through a gap in the fence and climbed up on some rocks twenty feet above the lion pen where they wanted to see the lions and tigers. Pointing to the lions and tigers they shouted excitedly, “Hey, mom we can see them.” The boys had no concept how much danger they were in. The mother saw it immediately. What could she do? If she screamed they would panic and slip off the rocks. So she knelt down, spread out her arms, and said, “Boys come and get a hug.” And they came running.

Jesus knows the danger we are in. He knows the eternal death and punishment waiting for us because we have fallen short of God’s glory. He reaches out his loving arms and invites us to come to him. In his hands we see the nail prints left over from the terrible death he suffered on the cross for your sins. In his face we see the perfect life we could never live. In Jesus our Morningstar we have the full confidence that we are ready to meet him when he returns because his righteousness has become our righteousness.

There will be some who will not be able to eat from the tree of life and live forever. “Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.” When I see this word “dog” here I think of some kids in my neighborhood growing up, who when they saw an ugly girl, they referred to her as a dog. In ancient times, there were the nice dogs that people kept in their homes and the dirty dogs that roamed around in packs feeding on garbage, attacking other animals and even people. Cities were built with walls and gates to protect from enemies and these dogs that were eager to snatch up any bit of garbage that was thrown over the wall. Remember how they eagerly devoured the body of wicked queen Jezebel when it was thrown out of the window in the wall of the city.

The writer John says, people who practice magic arts are like dirty dogs. So are those who are sexually immoral, as well as the murderers, the people who worship idols and people who tell lies. Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever loved or trusted something more than God? Have you ever hated someone or maybe not loved them as much as you should? Have you ever allowed your eyes to see something immoral on the
screen? Have you ever found yourself turning to your own resources and strength more than prayer and trusting in the name of the Lord? Look at these dirty dogs again. If it were not for Jesus, the Alpha and Omega who has washed us clean, credited us with his righteousness and given us a reward based on what he has accomplished for us, we would still be among those dogs outside the heavenly gates.

Last Christmas season, Open Bible had a stand at the Wildwood Town Hall, where we handed out information about our church, free snacks, including bottled water. In front of these treats was the word, “Free!” Anyone who wanted a bottle of water that passed by could have it. This bottled water helped establish contact with people so we might be able to provide them with information about Jesus, the Water of life.

Jesus has a plan for bringing people into his church and into his glory before the end comes. The plan involves using people like us to invite other people to drink deeply from his salvation, the water of life. He will not have angels do this work. He is depending on us to get it done. As we eagerly wait for his return, we do not sit on a street corner with our bags packed and ready to go. We continue with our daily lives, but always with the prayer that Jesus would provide us with opportunities to invite people to drink deeply of the water of life before the end comes. The message is so beautiful, “Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”

Inside all of us there is an ache and yearning for the Garden of Eden. We want a better world. We want a place that is safe. We long for a place where we are loved perfectly and where we can show perfect love. Jesus is preparing such a place for you. The Revelation to John is a very special book of the Bible because it gives us vivid descriptions of what is coming for us in the future.

We are going to see Jesus real soon. He is our bright morning star. He brings lasting light to a world in darkness. Come then. Take the free gift of the Water of Life. Pass it out to others. Your thirst for forgiveness will be quenched. All for your eternal good health. Come Lord Jesus.” Amen.