

2nd Sunday of Easter
April 24, 2022

“No fear in the presence of the Resurrected and Almighty ‘I AM’!”
(Revelation 1:17-18)
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today’s text for this Easter morning is from our Epistle reading Revelation 1:17-18.

“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”

Here ends our text.

Last week we read the story from John’s Gospel of his witness of what he saw when he looked into the empty tomb. This was a younger John who had outrun Peter. He saw the linen cloths and believed – believed that Jesus was alive. And yet, his understanding of not complete of how the resurrection gives the believer so much comfort.

Yes, this was the John that leaned on Jesus’ breast who was especially loved by Jesus. And now this John many years later, sometime after the year 90 AD, not so young and fleet of foot, now exiled on the island of Patmos for his witness to the Gospel of the risen Christ, still loved, of course, by Jesus, yet going through much tribulation like all brothers and sisters of Christ. So, John says beginning at verse 9 of our epistle.

“I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,”

On the Lord’s Day, Sunday, the first day of the week, the day of Christ’s resurrection, this vision comes to John. He heard a voice behind him, a voice like a trumpet. Maybe this brings to your mind the story of Mary Magdalene that we

heard last week. In her tribulation and sadness, she heard a voice behind her. And it wasn't until that voice was identified that it brought her much comfort and joy. For it was the voice of her risen Lord Jesus. "Mary" Jesus said to her. And she responded, "Rabboni", Teacher. Our Lord Jesus continues to teach us through the witness of John's book of Revelation that He who was once dead is alive and is present with us always. He is present with His church throughout all ages. For we also must go through much tribulation to enter the kingdom of God.

In verse 19, the verse immediately following our epistle, John is told to write the things that he has seen. The real things which are, and the things that will take place after this.

"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this..."

The "after this" is the continued life of God's people, His church until Jesus' final coming. John's book of Revelation is recorded for our spiritual comfort and benefit. For we, like John, and like Paul, must go through many tribulations to enter the kingdom of God.

So, said Paul, in Acts 14, after he was stoned and left for dead by opposing Jews for his Gospel witness at Lystra.

"And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

The book of Revelation is a repetition of this theme that God is faithful to His persecuted church. God's saints are still at war against the enemies that Jesus defeated. The victory is ours and yet the battle is waged against us as Daniel prophesied in chapter 7. And like the book of Daniel, much symbolism of dragon and beast is given to the enemies of God in John's book of Revelation.

Yes, we will be privileged to hear portions of Revelation in our epistle reading for the next 4 weeks during this Eastertide that we may grow in our faith and understanding of Christ's constant and enduring love for us! It is not a fearful book but a book of comfort that the Alpha and Omega, the Almighty resurrected Christ sustains and defends His saints!

John needed to be assured of this as his vision began. For John heard a voice from behind him. And when he turned to see who it was, he fell like a dead man. The sight of who he beheld was so overpowering that he could only but fall at the feet of Jesus like a dead man.

“I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength”

Yes, John still was a sinner like all of us. And his immediate reaction was fear in the presence of God. Isaiah too, when he received a vision of God, was filled with fear that he was a man of unclean lips among people of unclean lips. Peter in the boat after the miraculous catch of fish in Luke 5 told Jesus to depart from him for he was a sinner. Even the reflection of God from the angels at Jesus’ tomb caused the soldiers to fall and shake like dead men.

As Hebrews 10:31 teaches us,

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Yes, it a fearful thing for the person, as Paul says, **“who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace.”**

And as John says in our epistle in very similar words, **“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.”**

There is no comfort for those who have rejected Jesus, only fear. But what John sees and hears are a comfort to those who believe in Jesus. For the first thing that Jesus says to John is

“Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen

Jesus lays His assuring hand on John, just as did at His transfiguration and tells him to not be afraid. So, Jesus said the same to Peter in the boat. Why? Because

Jesus lives! He was dead but not anymore! His resurrected hands with the nail prints that He showed His disciples prove this to be true. Amen! Yes, it is so! If Jesus can say an “Amen”, so can we!

The eternal Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last continues to reign over His people so that they are not harmed by the dragon or the beast! Jesus has defeated them. That’s the message of Revelation. Yes, there are battles that all Christians must fight. But victory is assured.

He who is in the midst of His church as pictured by the seven lampstands, the whole perfect, complete church of God, will guard and shepherd them from all evil. His all-seeing eye of fire sees all evil that could harm His people and with the sword of His word He defends our souls! In His hands are stars that illuminate his word to His people. He makes sure His word goes forth from His missionaries and pastors and teachers who are kept safe in His hand.

Yes, grace and peace come to us from the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Forgiveness has been won for us through, **“Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.”**

And where there is forgiveness, there is peace. Peace and reconciliation with God through the blood of the Lamb. These are the very first words spoken by Jesus to His disciples as He appears to them behind locked doors.

He is the firstborn from the dead! He did it. And because He is the first, all who believe and trust in Him will also rise from the dead! This was Jesus faithful witness going into death and continues now as He has been raised from the dead.

What a witness for us again this morning. Jesus holds the key to eternal life. Through Him alone is heaven opened and hell closed on all unbelievers.

“And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”

So hear Jesus message through His messenger John and do not fear. It comes from the risen, **“Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”**

Blessed Easter! He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)