

**Second Sunday of Easter – April 28, 2019**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

*Pastor Charles Heup*

**Revelation 1:9-19 (NIV)**

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. (10) On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, (11) which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." (12) I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, (13) and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. (14) The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. (15) His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. (16) In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. (17) When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. **Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. (18) I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.**

In the name of our Risen Savior – dear friends:

When Jesus was on trial before the high priest He identified himself as the Son of God and proclaimed: **"And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."** (Mark 14:62 NIV) With those words he was announcing that death and grave would not hold him. He would rise to live and to return in glory as the judge of all people. The apostle John who was observing the trial may very well have heard these words. Later in his life, Jesus granted John a vision of his heavenly glory. In this vision John was given a glimpse of what would take place from the time of Jesus' resurrection until the final judgment. This vision has been recorded and preserved for us in the book of Revelation. Today we are going to begin a series of sermons from this interesting and somewhat difficult book. We'll see that Revelation Proclaims Our Risen Savior.

**Revelation Proclaims Our Risen Savior**

1. With the words of a special writer (9-11)
2. With a glorious vision (12-16) and
3. With a life-giving message (17-19)

The inspired writer of this text identifies himself in this way: **John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus.** What else do we know about our brother and companion in Christ? The Gospel accounts reveal that John was one of the closest disciples of Jesus. Jesus entrusted his mother, Mary to his care. But he certainly doesn't have any "airs" about himself. Although he was a leader in the Church, he humbly identifies himself as just another one of the members of the congregations to which he was writing. He speaks of himself as their brother and companion – one who shares with them in suffering and the kingdom and the patient endurance that were theirs in connection Jesus. Together they were part of Jesus kingdom. Jesus was ruling in their hearts, just as he rules in ours, through the power of the Gospel. For John, as for other Christians, a connection with Christ's kingdom meant suffering and the need for waiting patiently for Jesus to fulfill his promises to take him into the kingdom of glory.

As a part of his suffering because of his connection with Christ and his Gospel, John was living in exile as a prisoner to the island of Patmos. He was cut off and physically separated from his fellow Christians because he boldly proclaimed the truth about Jesus – that he died and rose again as the Savior from sin. But he was not cut off from Christ. The Lord Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to John to comfort and encourage him and also

to inspire him to write the words of this book. **On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, (11) which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."**

It was the Lord's Day – the day the Lord rose from the dead – in other words it was Sunday when the John heard the voice of God. A voice which was as loud and clear as a trumpet spoke to him and told him to write down what he saw and to send it to 7 churches located throughout western Asia Minor. At the Lord's direction – John tells us of our risen Savior and his concern for the Christian Church as he writes of the special visions which he saw while on the Island of Patmos.

**I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13) and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man,"**

One of the most interesting and also the most mystifying things about the book of revelation are the symbolic items which John saw in his visions. In addition to remembering that Revelation proclaims our risen Savior, one of the keys to unlocking the mysteries in this book is to let the Scriptures provide solutions for us. Sometimes the answers are found tucked away in other areas of the Bible, but at other times the explanation is right around the corner so to speak. In this vision John looked and he saw seven golden lampstands. Later in verse 20 of this chapter the mystery of the lampstands is revealed to us: **the seven lampstands are the seven churches.** (Mystery solved!)

Among the lampstands John saw one like a “son of man.” This phrase was one of Jesus' favorite ways of speaking about himself. Jesus used that term to emphasize the fact that even though he was the Son of God that he had become one of us to save us from our sins.

Once before, on the Mount of Transfiguration, John had seen a glimpse of Jesus in his divine glory. Now John sees the risen Jesus in his glory once again. He was **dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. (14) The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. (15) His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. (16) In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.**

These words paint some vivid images of Jesus. They also suggest certain characteristics. John describes Jesus' head and hair as being white like wool and as white as snow. When we hear these words – we might recall Daniel's vision of the Lord. **The Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool.** Or we might recall the words of Isaiah 1:18 **The LORD [says], "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.** The words of our text describe Jesus as being holy and pure! John saw the holy one!

His eyes were like blazing fire. Perhaps this is speaking of Jesus' ability to look into men's hearts. His feet were like bronze – this picture suggests Jesus' rule and authority over all things – including the exercise of his power over all his enemies for the benefit of the church. His voice was “like the sound of rushing waters” – a phrase suggesting the life giving power of Jesus' word and reminds us of the way Jesus spoke of himself as the one who could provide us with living water. **Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.** (John 4:14 NIV) His face was like the shining sun, displaying his majestic glory.

It's so easy for us to get so wrapped up in explaining all the little details of a vision like this that we might forget to step back and look at the whole picture. (show picture) John saw something which is very

comforting and reassuring to us. He saw the risen and glorified Jesus walking among his churches. John saw a vision of Jesus doing what he promised. **“Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them,”** Jesus says. (Matthew 18:20 NIV) The Scriptures also tell us that Jesus is interceding for his church and that he rules over it protecting it even in the midst of hardship and persecution. One of the ways that Jesus provides for the needs of his church is by sending his representatives to declare his word to his people. The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:10-13 **Jesus ... ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)** **11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

John saw Jesus holding seven stars in his hands as he walked among the churches. (Revelation 1:20 NIV) explains this picture. **The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.** The only remaining mystery for us will melt away if we remember that the word “angel” in the Greek means messenger. Jesus is holding the pastors of his church (the messengers he has sent) in his hand to support and uplift them in their work of building up the church of Christ.

One last image strikes us from John’s vision. **Out of [Jesus’] mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.** This is a scriptural picture describing the powerful word of God that Jesus speaks. In Ephesians 6 Paul encourages us to make us of all the tools that God provides for us in our fight against Satan including **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** The book of Hebrews also speaks of the word of God as a sword: **For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.** (Hebrews 4:12 NIV)

These verses from the opening chapter of the book of Revelation proclaim our risen Savior through a special writer and in a glorious vision. In the final section of this morning’s text our risen Savior proclaims a life-giving message to us.

John describes his reaction to this vision of our living Savior. **When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.** Fear is a normal human reaction to the majesty and holiness of God. But our risen Savior takes away our fear. In our Gospel reading for today we heard how Jesus disciples were gathered in the upper room after Jesus was crucified because they were afraid for their lives. The Risen Savior appeared to them and said, “Peace be with you.” He removed their fears with his loving presence. Once again, Jesus does the same thing for John. **Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.**

With these words Jesus reminded John and us of who he is and what he has done for us. By reminding us that he is the first and the last – Jesus assures us that he is true God. He has always been and will always be. He is eternal. In order to rescue us from our sins he became a son of man. He became one of us so he could die in our place. But a dead Savior would mean nothing to us. A dead Savior could not provide us with the assurance that our sins had really been paid for. A dead Savior could not remove our fear of God’s holiness. The proof of our salvation is in a living and risen Savior who conquered death for us. That’s why Jesus tells us: **I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.** Because he is alive Jesus has the power to raise us from the dead. He can unlock death’s hold on us and release us from the grave. He has set us free from Satan’s power. The gates of hell are open and we have been set free from eternal punishment.

That's the message of Easter! That's the message that Jesus proclaims here in the opening chapters of this book. It's a message which is at the heart and core of all that Jesus wants us to know about our life in his church on earth. It's a message which will sustain us through the ups and downs of life. It comforts us in the face of physical death with its assurance that death is but a sleep. It's a message which assures us of Jesus ability to rescue his church and to take it to the Kingdom of heaven. It's a message which assures us of our Lord's abiding presence here in time and hereafter in eternity. It's a message which Jesus wanted preserved for us and so he reminded John once again to: **Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.**

John was to write down what he had seen. He saw and wrote about the risen Savior. John was to write down what is now. Now Jesus is ruling over all things for the benefit of his church. Now Jesus is with his church to support and encourage it with his word. That's what John wrote. John was also instructed to write down what will take place later. In the remainder of this book John will describe how Christ will provide the final victory of all believers and their glorious eternity with him. It's a message which fills our hearts with joy and hope and our lives with praise. It's a message we'll hear more about next week as we continue our discussion of this book to learn more of the life giving message Revelation Proclaims from our Risen Savior. Amen.