

**Second Sunday after Easter – April 3, 2016**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

*Pastor Charles Heup*

**Revelation 1:9-18 (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.**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ;

Adults often have a vision for their children and grandchildren –many times that vision is for a better life than what the adult enjoyed – perhaps a better education, less sickness, better financial status, more social or recreational activities. Sadly, that kind of vision is often shattered by the realities of life and many adults are left wondering what the future holds for the next generation as they contemplate the temptations and struggles which the younger generation faces – which were not a part of our childhood. The realities of our Lord's prophecies that as the end time draws ever closer that life in this world will grow increasingly difficult for the Lord's children are evident in the broken homes, the fear of terrorism, liberal attitudes toward sex, and other godless actions and attitudes which will pose challenges for our young people.

Thankfully, our risen Savior has a vision for all of his children (young & old alike) which reveals his glory and provides hope for all of us. Our text for today includes a part of that vision. It is

***Theme: A Vision to Share With Your Children***

- 1. The Risen Savior reveals his glory to us**
- 2. The Risen shares a message of hope with us**

As we consider this vision it's important for us to remember that although the apostle John is the one who relates the vision – he's sharing with us the vision and the words of our risen Savior Jesus.

The opening verses of this text provide us with some background information that will help us to understand the rest of this text. John introduces himself as one who was patiently waiting for the Lord's rescue from the suffering and persecution, which was troubling the Lord's church. In fact, John was in exile on a small island – cut off from the rest of society – as a punishment for proclaiming the resurrection of Christ and for his faithful preaching of the Word of God.

It was on the Lord's Day – Sunday, we'd say – the first day of the week on which Christians commemorate Jesus' victorious resurrection and his victory over sin, death and the devil. John reports that he was in the spirit – the Holy Spirit had opened his heart and mind to spiritual things as he meditated on the Lord's words with prayer. He was under the Spirit's influence and able to see and hear things not ordinarily seen and heard such as the vision which he reports in this text. He was inspired by the Holy Spirit and given the

command to write what saw and then to send his scroll to seven churches or congregations. These congregations were to receive this writing as the inspired word of the Lord Jesus. The seven congregations listed in this text would each receive a personal letter from the Lord – the cities are listed in the order in which one would visit them if one were traveling from one city to next.

When John heard the loud and clear voice, described as “a loud voice like a trumpet” he reacted in the way any one of us would. He turned toward the voice and beheld the Risen Savior displaying his glory. **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.**

### **1. The Risen Savior reveals his glory to us**

Before John saw the source of the voice – he saw seven golden lampstands – later John will explain that these lampstands represent the seven churches that would receive this letter. As we think about this symbolism, we call to mind our Savior’s words speaking of his disciples as the light of the world. (cf. Matthew 5:14) Walking around between the lampstands was “someone ‘like a son of man,’” someone who looked like a human being. As we continue to examine our text, it becomes clear that this someone – is the one who described himself as The Son of Man – our glorified Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This heavenly visitor had hair, eyes, hands, and feet like a human being but he was also remarkably different from other human beings. For John, the lampstands and the long flowing robe with the golden sash Jesus wore, would have brought to mind the OT temple and the priestly robes. The prophet Isaiah had a similar vision 700 years earlier. (Isaiah 6:1) **He saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple.**

Jesus’ **head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow.** Again, words of the prophet Isaiah shed some light on this description. Remember what Isaiah wrote concerning our sins? (Isaiah 1:18) **"Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."** Jesus’ white hair points to his sinlessness and holiness. What John saw in his vision is similar to another OT vision. Daniel described the ageless eternal God who appeared to him in a vision in this way -- (Daniel 7:9) **"As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze."**

Jesus’ **eyes were like blazing fire.** The Psalmist reminds us: (Psalm 34:15) **The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry.** The Lord sees and knows the needs of his people. He sees and knows all. Nothing is hidden from his sight. The book of Hebrews reminds us: (Hebrews 4:13) **Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.**

**His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace...**it’s a bit more difficult for us to explain the appearance of our Lord’s feet. The Scriptures often speak the Lord using his enemies as a footstool -- (Psalm 8:6) **You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.** (Psalm 110:1) **The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."**

**His voice was like the sound of rushing waters.** John doesn’t just have the power of Jesus words in mind when he compares his voice to the sound of a thunderous waterfall. This is also an indication of his deity – Ezekiel described the voice of God as being like the roar of rushing waters.

**In his right hand he held seven stars.** John himself explains this later in his writing. The seven stars are the seven angels or messengers – we'd say pastors of the seven churches. The Lord holds them safe in his hands.

And there's also no doubt about the meaning of John's next phrase: **out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword.** What is it that comes out of Jesus' mouth? It's his Word. Paul speaks of God's word as the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17) when he encourages us to put on the full armor of God. Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word of God as being living and active – sharper than any two edged sword. As we think of the Word of God we are reminded that in his word there is both Law and Gospel. Jesus himself had proclaimed: (John 3:36) **Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.**

Finally, John describes Jesus in this way: **His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.** One needs only think back to the account of the transfiguration of Jesus to recall that John had seen Jesus reveal his heavenly glory in this same fashion.

We've spent some time exploring possible explanations to the various details of this vision. As interesting as this vision might be for us and our children – we dare not neglect to focus on the practical aspects of this vision.

## **2. The Risen shares a message of hope with us**

This vision clearly shows us that the same Jesus who had suffered at the hands of sinful men and who experienced the same kind of persecution the members of the seven churches were enduring was now exalted in heaven where he rules all things for the benefit of his church. What had happened to him would one day happen to them.

John's vision portrayed the fulfillment of Jesus' promises that wherever 2 or 3 are gathered in his name that he would be with them.

It's comforting and encouraging to us and our children to see our glorified Savior and to reflect on the awesome power which he has at his disposal to be used to keep his people safe from whatever threatens their spiritual welfare. This vision of Jesus' glory assures us of his victory over sin, death and the devil. It complements and foreshadows the message of hope which Jesus spoke in this lesson.

Although the Lord Jesus was expressing his loving concern for his church – this vision was too much for John. **When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.** John fainted in fear at the sight of the Lord. **Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid."**

Sin fills us with fear in the presence of the Holy God. Jesus removes that fear for John with his command – stop being afraid. Just as John had no reason to fear the presence of the Holy God, so because of what Jesus has done for us there is no reason for us to be afraid of God. That's something we can share with our children and others as we encourage them to put their trust in him and to confess their sins to him. We can put away our fears because of who Jesus is and what he has done. He has taken our sins away.

**I am the First and the Last.** Jesus once more assures us that he is the eternal God. Then he continues by reminding us: **I am the Living One.** Don't forget my resurrection Jesus tells us with these words. His resurrection assures us of our own resurrection. Death could not hold our Savior in the grave and it will hold us there either. **I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.** Jesus conquered death for us. He has the power to unlock the gates of hell and death for us. He has rescued us from the control Satan and death. Because he lives, we too shall live. What a glorious message of hope for us, for our children, and for our world! Amen.