

Title: Fear Not!
Text: Revelation 1:17-18
Theme: The result of Resurrection Day
Occasion: Resurrection Day 2021
Prop Stmt. The Who of heaven gives hope to the what on earth.

Read Text – Revelation 1

Two days before her 4th birthday, Alice was diagnosed with an incurable brain stem tumor. She had nine months to live. Her dad, Joe, is an associate pastor and a good carpenter. He said, “I decided several months ago that if Alice must go, I wanted to build her coffin, or as I call it, her final bed. It just seemed right, and something I could do to honor my daughter.” One Friday night, Joe and his brothers and their brother-in-law did just that. They worked all night long and finished her bed just after the sun came up Saturday morning. Joe said, “I really hoped she’d never have to use it.”

There are a lot of things that we experience that we hoped we would not have to endure. But, the things that we are called to endure do not happen without purpose, neither do they happen without hope. And I mean real hope. I am not talking about a flimsy and shallow momentary feeling. I am talking about the sink your teeth into, chew hard while the flavors explode in your mouth and nasal cavities kind of hope. I am not talking about cheap hope that you try to manufacture because you are pretending that your life is not what it is, or medicated hope you get from a bottle or pill. I am talking about a hope that can stare life right in the eyes without blinking because it sees what is beyond and realizes that what is beyond is infinitely bigger than what is here. In order to understand the here and now, I need to see and know the then and there.

That is what the book of Revelation is about. The heart of this book is not the revelation of, that is the revealing of events that are going to take place on this earth in the end times. That certainly happens. But according to the opening words, this book is about the revelation of Jesus Christ. You need to know the Who if you are going to understand the what and the when. In fact, facing the what and when of this world without knowing the Who is terrifying.

You, me and John are part of a very unstable world. This world is very different than a year ago. We want it go back to normal. Will it? I don’t know. Russia is massing troops on the border of Ukraine. Myanmar is not settling down. China is flexing her muscles and N. Korea is launching rockets again. Covid numbers are increasing again and yet thousands are getting vaccinated. Life is very different for many of us. John was no stranger to change. In fact, for John life seemed more predictable before he met Christ than after. Before Christ, John and James were probably planning on doing what their dad did. Fish. All in all, one could earn an living. But, Christ changed all of that. Life on the sea of Galilee was a long-ago memory now.

The apostle John is an old man. He is likely the last of the disciples to still be alive. Peter is dead. Paul is dead. James is dead. Jerusalem is a pile of charred rubble. There is no

temple. In fact, there is no nation of Israel. John did not have a home to go back to, even if he could. John is in exile. He is a prisoner banished to an island for prisoners. Patmos was one of the islands with penal settlements. And on this day, like many other first days of the week, John would worship. It was then that he heard a voice that informed him that he wasn't done. His mission in life wasn't over. There was one more task. John, you are to write a letter to these 7 churches. They need to know what you see. Not only do they need to know what you see, we need to know what John saw.

Here is the sermon in a sentence. John saw Jesus in his resurrected and ascended glory. Seeing Jesus in his glory enabled John to understand his world and what was going to happen in his world. That is what you need to see. You need to see what John saw. You need to understand what John learned. Your world is unstable, but your Savior is unstoppable because his resurrection is undeniable. What are you going to hold on to? What are you going to try to find your hope in? This world, or Jesus?

I. **Fear not because of who I AM** (17b-18a)

Tuesday afternoon and evening I helped my daughter and son-in-law load a 26-foot U-Haul in NC with all their stuff in preparation for a long move back up to Michigan on Wednesday. We finished loading before 6am on Wednesday and now had to hook up and secure a trailer to the truck, then drive a car up onto the trailer and secure the car to the trailer that we were hoping that we had secured properly to the truck that we were going to be driving through the mountains of western NC and eastern TN. It was dark, rain was pouring down. We couldn't see what we were doing, and to make matters worse, neither of us really knew what we were doing. I don't drive trucks for a living and he doesn't operate wenches. But, we had to secure that car on the trailer. We both had visions of going up an incline only to have this thing come bouncing off and getting smashed by the 18-wheeler behind us. As a dad, and a father-in-law, I really want to be the go-to guy for my kids. I want to put them at ease because of my expertise. In that moment when my son-in-law was trying to figure out how to secure these straps in place and asked, "you know how to do this?" I had to say, much to his disappointment and mine, "No, I don't." My presence provided very little comfort. That is not the case with Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the first and the last."

A. **I am the first and the last.**

The reason those of you who know, love and trust Jesus have nothing to fear is because of who Jesus is. He is the first and the last. The first and the last is another way of saying, the beginning and the end or the Alpha and the Omega. Alpha is the A of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the final letter. This is a reference to the absolute uniqueness of God. There is nothing that can be compared to him. As the first, he is the one who brought everything into being. Everything that you see, he made. He is the last. He will bring everything that he made to its rightful conclusion. Jesus has the final word. He had the first word and he will have the final word. He will bring his creation to its destination.

He is the first and the last. Fear not. He is not only the first and the last but related to that Jesus said...

B. I am the living one.

That means that he is the one who is life, who has life and who is eternally present. As the living one, who is the first and the last, he is unstoppable, unalterable, undeniable, unbreakable, unremovable, unimpeachable, unfathomable, irreducible, irrevocable, irreplaceable and invincible. He is it. He is the ancient of days, the great I am and the blessed hope. He is never out of style, out of step or out of time. He is living one before all things and the living one after all things. If the living one who is first and the last says to not be afraid, then you don't need to be afraid. But, we have even more reasons not be afraid. Look at what Jesus has done.

II. Fear not because of what I have done. (18b)

A. I died.

The living one died. The first and the last died. How could that be? How is that even possible? How could the one who possesses life have life taken from him? Technically speaking, he couldn't. That is why Jesus said, no one can take my life from me. The only way for the possessor of life and the giver of life to lose his life was if he freely, willfully gave it away. Jesus died because he chose to die. The nails did not keep him on the cross, his love did. His commitment to fulfill his ministry kept him there.

Jesus died because that was the only way you could live. Your sins are a serious offense to God. Your sins have to be punished with a punishment that matches the level of your sins. The problem is, and it is a serious problem is that we have, in our heart of hearts rebelled against God. In our natural condition, we laugh at sin, we wink at rebellion, we think that what we do is cute. But, the truth is, every sin is an act of tyranny against God. If we could kill God, we would have a thousand times. But, our bullets cannot find him. Our sin is serious. It is so serious that it demands a punishment that we cannot bear.

Recently, a couple in Arizona and another in California each shot off a firework as part of a baby reveal celebration. The blue explosion meant they were having a boy, a pink one – a girl. But, they made the mistake of shooting this off in the dry season and the explosion ignited a fire. The one burned over 27,000 acres and the other over 19,000 acres. How do you pay for that? Absolute justice (eye for an eye) would never be satisfied. Our sin deserves the death of one who is so infinitely pure, so valuable, so perfect, so priceless that this payment would actually be enough. The living one, died because he gave what is infinitely pure to pay for your sin. This is what your God has done for you. This is what your God has chosen to do for you. This is what your God planned to do, chose to do, and did for you. He died.

What do you do with that? Do you believe that? Do you realize how offensive your sin is to God? Do you realize how guilty you are and in need of a forgiveness that you cannot

buy? And do realize what Christ has done for you? Do you trust in what Christ has done for you by dying for you as the full and final payment for your sin? If you do not trust in Christ, then what are you trusting in? What are you going to offer to God as payment? Your sin has just scorched a million acres and you have a counterfeit dollar bill. Jesus has offered to pay for your sin for you. There is no getting around this, what are going to do? He died. He secured our pardon. It is yours by faith alone. I urge you to trust him, right now, believe him and accept the offer he secured. He died. What is more?

B. I am alive forevermore.

Jesus died and he rose again. The one who defeated death says, “fear not.” The one who died and rose again is alive forevermore. He will never die again. Death is going to die, but Jesus won’t. That is worth something. If Jesus had only died, and theoretically paid for our sins, what good would that have done? If the death of Christ only made it possible for us to be reconciled to God, but did not result in the defeat of death itself, what good would that be? But the resurrection changed all of that. In fact, the resurrection gives meaning to the cross. The disciples along with the early preachers and writers in the church said very little about the death of Christ without speaking about his resurrection. The two go hand in hand. The fact of the death of Christ is followed by the fact of the resurrection of Christ. There are several different places in the New Testament where summary statements about the gospel are made. These statements, like 1 Corinthians 15.1-3 and Romans 10.9 make it crystal clear that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential to the gospel. Without the resurrection there is no good in the gospel. Without the resurrection we would simply have news. The resurrection is what makes it good news. Jesus is alive forevermore. There will never be a time when he will not be alive.

Because of who I am, and what I have done, you don’t need to fear. But because of who I am and what I have done, I have something that you need to know about.

III. Fear not because of what I possess. (18c)

What happens when you purchase a car? You get the keys. What happens when you close on a house? You get the keys. Keys speak of ownership and ownership speaks of authority. If I have the keys I get to open and close, lock and unlock, let in and let out.

A. I have the keys of Death.

Look at what the keys are to. The keys are to death and to the realm of the dead. Without Christ, death is terrifying. It is final. It is unknown. It is the end or the beginning of a terror. Death is painful. Again, apart from Christ, what do we know about death? Death is the culmination of dying and dying is awful. Dying is the loss of dignity. It is the loss of strength, ability, mind, words, taste, sight, smell. Death is the loss of relationships. It is separation. Death is cruel, harsh and no respecter of persons. The wages of sin is death, therefore it is appointed to every person to die. But, Jesus has the keys of death. And what is more, he has the keys of hades.

B. I have the keys of Hades.

Hades is the realm of the dead. Hades is where Jesus went when he died. Jesus did more than go there. It would be more accurate to say, that he invaded Hades. He took over and the reason why we know that he took over is because he has the keys. No one goes there unless he opens the door and sends them. He is in charge. And no one goes there, who is in him. That is why he says, "Fear not." You have no reason to fear. I have the keys of death and hades. Since Jesus has the keys to your greatest enemy, then you have nothing to fear from our enemy.

Many caskets come with a locking device that is designed to seal the lid shut. I was doing a service at a graveside when the casket came unlocked. It was very upsetting for the funeral director, but really, what's the point? When Jesus returns, the dead in Christ will rise first. Those locks won't matter. Jesus has the keys.

When Joe and his brothers built the coffin for Alice he didn't put a lock on it. He said, "in the event that on resurrection day she decides to push her way out, maybe she'll smile when she realizes her Daddy made it as easy as possible to escape that thing." He said that he really hoped that she wouldn't have to use it, but she did. How do parents lose a little girl and through their tears thank him for giving her to them even for a few short years? How do they thank the Lord in faith believing that God has orchestrated this in such a way and for such a purpose that later they will give thanks and really feel thankful? Joe said that we are thankful for so much goodness from Your hand, but truth be told, right now we'd trade the goodness we've seen while losing Alice for just not losing her in the first place. And yet, we trust you.

We trust and do not fear because he is the first the last, the living one. He died and is alive forevermore. He has the keys of death and hades. Therefore, one day, death shall be no more. One day, we will have a funeral for death. One day people like John won't be banished, death will be. Death will be banished forever because the resurrection of Christ place an unbreakable curse upon death and placed an unbreakable promise on us.