

One Like a Son of Man
Revelation 1:4-18

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

This past week we didn't have any Lenten services. We didn't have any special Thursday night or Friday night services. We actually didn't have any special worship times or services since last Sunday morning. And it seems odd. The Lenten Season is over. Holy Week is over. All the Easter eggs, at least we hope, have been found, and much of the jelly beans and candy have been eaten. So now what? What are we to do now? Go on vacation looking forward to a nice summer and wait to start everything again next Fall?

Last week after so many weeks of building up to that Easter moment, Easter Morning came, beautiful and bright, and the Son rose shining brightly in radiant glory. The cross was empty and the grave was open, and the glorious message of Easter was proclaimed. Now we walk away from the foot of the cross and leave behind the empty grave. We must continue on into the year, in the resurrection glory, to continue to fulfill the mission of Christ. The story doesn't just end at the cross and the empty grave. Jesus continued to fulfill his mission and direct his followers to do the same. Christmas is not the beginning and Easter the end. The work of God continues now and always.

The disciples that very first day of the week according to John's text are given the Holy Spirit and the power of the keys. The power to forgive sins and the power to withhold forgiveness from anyone. From that point on those disciples were changed from students, from followers, to being leaders, to being evangelists, preachers, and missionaries, telling everyone of Jesus Christ and converting many to the faith.

By the time Luke is writing Acts, he is calling Christ's disciples – Apostles, because they are now people sent with messages. The Message of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the fact that Jesus died and rose again, giving us all new life through his sacrifice. In this first reading we see that the disciples are risking imprisonment and their lives to continue to preach and teach in the temples. Peter says they are committed to being the witnesses of Jesus Christ to all the world. He says "The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things..."

To be a witness means that you have to tell. You have to share what you saw, what you heard, what you experienced. A witness can not just stand and stare. Try it. what does this tell you. Absolutely nothing. A Witness of Christ can not just stand at the empty grave or

stare at the cross and expect people to understand what he or she is trying to say. The witness explains what is special about this empty grave and the empty cross. The witness testifies as to what they believe and know as the truth.

So are you witnessing? You believe and have experienced God, you have talked with him in worship, in prayer and other times of your life. Are you a witness that testifies about Jesus the Christ?

John testified to what he witnessed. He saw and heard from the Lord the words he would write in Revelation of Jesus Christ to John, the last book of the Bible. This book is written in the apocalyptic style of writing which generally makes people wonder and question it. Apocalyptic writing is written in almost a code language to get the point across. Generally it is a simple message told in very outlandish graphic style. People for centuries have been trying to interpret John's vision and figure out all the secrets to that Revelation of Jesus Christ about. There is books and videos describing what some think the number of the beast means, or what do the seven horns represent, or what about the seven bowls or seven lamp stands or seven trumpets. Numerologist even try adding numbers then subtract numbers all to try to come up with some meaning that makes it sound scientific so that people believe. Psychics and seers have even used the imagery of Revelation to validate their supposed visions. Do you think when John wrote this letter of Revelation that is what he was intending for people to do with it for the next two thousand years.

Probably not. Instead he was writing this letter as a witness, for the simple sole purpose of giving others the story of Christ. In this book John is addressing it to seven specific churches of that time, Regions of modern day Turkey and Greece. But even though he is addressing seven specific regional or city churches he also is addressing all churches and people that believe of all times and places. Because John is witnessing to what Jesus is saying to him and sharing it so that others may come to know. In verse 3 right before our reading we hear that all people need to hear and read these words. It says: "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it".

Blessed are those who *read* and those who *hear* and those who *keep* to what is written. So its not just hearing and believing but also doing. Witnessing to what is written here by how you live your life, by who do you say Jesus is, by how you express your faith in every daily walk of life.

John goes on to give us a picture of Jesus. He witnesses to us exactly who Jesus is, so that we may know and share that same message with others. He first mentions that Jesus is the **faithful witness**. He lived his life and death and resurrection as the faithful son, who is and always will be an ever-living witness to the grace of God and his love for us.

He then mentions that he is the **first born of the dead**. He gives us the imagery that Jesus was fully human, he did die, in fact he died terribly. But he is raised up, the first to rise and not die again. He opens up the gates of death and promises that at his 2nd coming all the dead will be raised. He is the first and through him all will find life. This is his promise this is who he is.

And John also mentions that he is the **ruler of kings on earth**. No one has hold over him. Not the Jewish Sanhedrin, not Pilate or Rome, not Herod or any king on earth. He is above and beyond them all. He is the one who is all powerful.

All three images relate to Jesus on earth, he was a faithful son, who died, allowing himself to be sacrificed even though he had more power then all the kings of the earth. And then John switches over to a heavenly image of Jesus by the 13 verse. A image of fear and power, a vision of one that looked like a man, but was robed in a long robe with a golden sash, and hair pure and white, his eyes like flames of fire, and his feet like burnished bronze, his voice like the roar of rushing water, and he held seven stars in one had and out of his mouth came a two edged sword and his face shone like the sun in full strength.

John takes us from the image of the good faithful son, who laid down his life on earth and gave up his power to the kings of the earth even though he had ultimate power to take us to the image of the risen Christ. The all powerful. Pure, eyes burning with fire and passion, grounded in the strength of the Word, he cuts both ways, and he holds the universe in his hands and shines like the eternal light that he said he was. This is the image that John now has of the Risen Christ. This is what he wants to witness to you about. Revelation is an easy book to really understand, because the core basic message is clear throughout the book. John is telling us that Jesus who suffered and died is now alive, in power, and he will make all things right. He is the first and the last, the living one, the one who is alive forevermore, the one who opens up the gates of death itself and has power forever. God's in charge. John saw it and witnessed to it.

May we also hear his words and be changed. From those who gather at the cross and sing hymns and stand and wait, to the ones who see the risen Christ, in power and sending out his witnesses to the world to share this message of glory. May we share it with all those we meet this week. Amen.

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May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.
AMEN.