

SERMON FOCUS: I must watch for our Lord's return.

SERMON FUNCTION: The hearer will recognize the reign of Christ and commit to living in anticipation of His return.

BACKGROUND: The book of Revelation is the contents of a vision given to Apostle John (writer of the gospel of John and 1, 2, and 3 John) while he was exiled to the Island of Patmos in about 95 A. D. John was the last living of the Twelve Disciples and is traditionally believed to be the only of the Twelve who died a natural death instead of being martyred. Revelation is apocalyptic literature, which means that it is highly symbolic. This section today, however, is the introduction, which is pretty straightforward. So today, let's look at the introduction of John's apocalyptic letter to the seven churches of Asia.

SCRIPTURE READING: Revelation 1:4-8

INTRODUCTION: I know that most of you are aware of the Thanksgiving holiday coming up this week, and of course I love to celebrate Thanksgiving. And we will do that at our Community Thanksgiving Service on Tuesday, and in our homes on Thursday. And most of you are aware of the Advent Season, starting next week as we lead up to Christmas. That is the time of the year when we look at how people anticipated the first coming of Christ and we use that time to increase our expectation of the second coming of Christ. But the last Sunday before Advent is "Reign of Christ" Sunday, and that is what we will be observing today to lead into our season of anticipation. This is an important day to acknowledge our King who has redeemed us!

MESSAGE:

1. CHRIST REDEEMED US

- a. (5) "To him who loves us and has set us free from our sins by his blood"
- b. For us to recognize our redemption, we have to acknowledge that we were imprisoned to something.
 - i. (Psalm 107:14) "He brought them out of darkness and gloom and broke their chains apart."
 - ii. (Rom. 6:18) "Having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness."
 - iii. (Rom. 6:16) "Don't you know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey--either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness."
- c. We *were* slaves to sin and imprisoned by our own sinfulness, but Christ has declared that we are free in Him.
- d. (John 8:34-36) "Jesus responded, "Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does

remain forever. So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free. -- John 8:34-36 (CSB)

- e. But maybe we don't *feel* free?
 - i. If Christ has declared us free, but we don't *feel* free, who are we to believe?
 - ii. I often get this weird feeling of my phone vibrating in my pocket. Often, I'll pull it out and it will not have rung or alerted. Sometimes, when I feel this feeling, I'll reach and my phone will not even be there.
 - iii. I took my mom to Ortho because of bad pain in her hip. The doctor found nothing wrong, but suspects that the pain she is feeling there actually originates in her back.
 - iv. Many people now deeply feel things about themselves that are simply untrue.
 - v. This is because our feelings are fallible, but our God is not. We can trust what Christ says about us because He has proven His dominion over death. We can trust when He says that we are free because...

2. CHRIST IS RESURRECTED

- a. (5) "The firstborn from the dead"
- b. John himself saw the resurrected Lord. He, the rest of the Twelve, and more than 500 witnesses over a 40 day period saw, heard, talked with, ate with the resurrected Jesus.
- c. We can believe these witnesses. They had no incentive to lie.
 - i. Most of these witnesses died for proclaiming what they had seen.
 - ii. The Greek word for witness is where we get our word for martyr.
 - iii. Why would you make up a lie about something that will get you killed. Why would an entire group of people make up a lie that would get them killed?
- d. The fact is that we can trust the historical account of Christ's resurrection. We can trust this as the validation of all His claims.
 - i. His claim as the Son of God.
 - ii. His claims of divine power and authority.
 - iii. He has proven His word to be true!
- e. Therefore, since Christ is resurrected, we can trust His rule.

3. CHRIST IS OUR RULER

- a. (6) "And made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father--to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."
- b. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the (v. 5) "ruler of the kings of the earth."
 - i. There is no higher authority.
 - ii. There is no more worthy ruler.
 - iii. His reign will last forever.
 - iv. By the way, His rule is not strictly in the future. His rule is now as well."

- c. So, if we are a kingdom, and He is the king, Christ is our ruler in the here and now as well. So why would we fret about earthly kingdoms which will come and go?
- d. If the POTUS leaves the United States and travels to visit another country, he does not forfeit his office. He remains our president while visiting another place.
- e. Christ has not forfeited His office while he sits at the right hand of the father interceding for us. He is still our ruler. And He will return!

4. CHRIST WILL RETURN

- a. "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him."
- b. (Acts 1:9-11) "After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven." -- Acts 1:9-11 (CSB)
 - i. It wasn't just these angels who said Christ would return...
- c. (John 14:3) "If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also. -- John 14:3 (CSB)
- d. (John 21:22) "If I want him to remain until I come," Jesus answered, "what is that to you? As for you, follow me." -- John 21:22 (CSB)
- e. (John 14:28) "You have heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I am coming to you.' -- John 14:28 (CSB)
- f. What can all this mean except that we must be watchful for Christ's coming. This means living like He commands that we live and telling others about our King!

5. THE GOSPEL IN SIMPLE FORM (adapted from Dr. James Merritt).

- a. Bad News: We are all sinners separated from God.
- b. Worst News: There is nothing we can do about our sin problem.
- c. Good News: Christ did for us what we cannot do for ourselves.
- d. Best News: Salvation and eternal life are a free gift, but you must receive it.

FOUR QUESTIONS:

1. What do you hear God saying to you?
2. What keeps you from doing that?
3. If you were to do that, what might be a good first step?
4. Who are you going to tell?

INVITATION HYMN # 311 Let Jesus Come Into Your Heart