

**Never be afraid again!      Revelation 1:12-20**  
**Easter 2                      4/18/2004      Pastor Jon Bergemann**

He is risen, He is risen indeed! Amen. The word of God for our consideration this morning is taken from the first chapter of the Revelation given to the apostle John (read text). In the name of Jesus, who was dead but is alive forever, dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

I had an interesting conversation with a couple from England a couple of weeks ago. We were all standing in the rain waiting to get into the Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. It turns out that this couple and their daughter, who lived just an hour from London, were in the U.S. on a vacation or holiday. They were frequent travelers to the States and seemed to do quite a bit of traveling around the world. We began to discuss the increased security in the airports and the threats of terrorism abroad. It was at this moment that they made a comment that really struck me. They said, "Indeed, we feel that it is not a matter of "if" but of "when" another terrorist attack on the U.S. will happen."

Quite a comment. How does it make you feel? Some of you may agree with it, some may disagree. But indeed, just the thought of future attacks on our country can seem to be a pretty unsettling thought. Do you always feel confident about your safety? Do you always feel optimistic about the future of our country? Or of our world? Or might you ever feel a bit nervous, a bit uncertain, a bit fearful about the world around us?

Are there answers? Are there things to which we can look for comfort? Absolutely! And we'll find lots of thoughts in the section of Scripture in front of us today, where we find the apostle John, scared out of his wits. Why so? Why was he scared?

Well, take a look at the picture of God which John saw: **"His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance."** If God had been looking at you, looking at me with those eyes of fire, what would that have felt like? If he had been looking into my head and heart, what would he have seen? Would He have been pleased? Would He have been pleased with my dedication, pleased with my attitudes? Would He have been pleased with the way I react to stress in my life? Would He be pleased with the level of trust I put in Him? Or not?

Can we understand why John was afraid? Sure. He was afraid because he – a sinful human being – was standing in front of a holy God. And, he understood clearly that God was NOT pleased with what He saw. He understood more clearly than he'd ever understood it that he deserved to be condemned by God, deserved to be sent to an eternity of hell. That's scary!

Finally all fear has its root there – in sin, in the understanding that we'll someday have to die, in the knowledge that eventually we'll face our Maker. Finally, that's why fear is connected with uncertain and life-threatening events in the world. The real issue isn't so much, "Hey, if something bad happens here, I might be effected!" or "What if I'm in the wrong place and get killed?!" The REAL issue, deep down behind it all is "Oh-oh – If I die I have to stand in front of that holy God. What would He think of me? What would He say?" And we know that – if God was to treat us fairly, as our sins deserved – God would have every right to cast us out of His presence forever. And that – that is the most terrifying thought we could imagine. That's the terror the apostle John felt – it's what you and I deserve to feel. It finally is the root of all fear.

All of which means what? Well, if the root of fear is sin, that would mean that – if there were an answer to sin – then we would no longer have any reason to be afraid, right? Absolutely so!

Did you hear what Jesus said to John? John was terrified, seeing his sinfulness, his imperfection. What does Jesus say to Him? Jesus says, **"Do not be afraid."** Time for a quick Greek lesson you might of heard before. The Greek construction that's used is a permanent prohibition. The permanent prohibition is used when the writer wants you to stop doing

something you've currently been doing AND . . . and this is an important "and" . . . and NEVER DO IT AGAIN! Did you catch that? The permanent prohibition means to "never do it again." So this verse could actually be translated, "**Never be afraid again.**" Whoa. Never be afraid again? Never ever? Yeah – that's exactly what Jesus said, He said, "Never be afraid again."

Then Jesus attaches reasons. Never be afraid again because "**I am the First and the Last.**" Jesus has always been – and always will be. He created the world, He was there when the world flooded, He's here today, and He'll be here forever.

But even more importantly, He adds, "**I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever!**" This Jesus – the one who is the First and the Last, the one who has always existed and will always exist, the one who is the ultimate in being "alive" (after all, He created life in the first place), He was DEAD! DEAD?! Yes, "DEAD!" Why so? Because that's exactly what it took to pay for your sins, and pay for them in full. And then? Then He became alive again! He got out of the grave! He rose on Easter morning! Why so? Because that – getting out of the grave – that's what proves that your sins were paid for in full, forever and ever!

And you know what? You heard that last Sunday. And you know what? You're going to hear that next Sunday, too. And you know what? I can guarantee you that as long as you're in this congregation, you're going to hear that, that Jesus died and Jesus rose, almost every single Sunday. You're going to hear it over and over again. Why so? Because that is THE ultimate message! That is THE message that guarantees your eternity. That is THE message which tells you that you're going to heaven! And ultimately, that is THE message which drives out fear, both forever . . . and now.

Remember? The root of all fear is what? It's sin! What if sin has been paid for? What if sin has been dealt with? That would mean that you have no more reason to fear! If sin has been paid for, that would mean that you can face God with confidence! If sin has been paid for, that means that you can face death with confidence! If sin has been paid for, that means that you can get on an airplane, go to NY City or Washington D.C., can go about your daily lives with complete and total confidence! That's all true if sin has been paid for. And it has! Why? Because Jesus has died for you and Jesus has risen for you! He's paid for your sins – in full!

And even more. Look back into our text. Jesus says, "**I hold the keys of death and Hades.**" Finally, HE determines when we are to leave this world. More importantly, HE determines where we are going to spend our eternity. Who determines it? The One who loved us so deeply that He came to lay down His life in our place. HE determines when we're going to leave this world, HE determines where we're going to spend our eternity. Is that good news? Absolutely!

But even more – Jesus appears . . . where? He appears in the midst of the seven lampstands. Who are the "seven lampstands"? God Himself explains. He says, "**. . . the seven lampstands are the seven churches.**" So where is Jesus? Jesus is right in the middle of the seven churches! Jesus is right in the middle of His people!

And you know what? That doesn't change when tragedy strikes, or danger looms. He remains with us as always.

So now let's go back and re-think the picture of Jesus which we saw in this section. He's looking powerful! He's looking incredibly strong! His face – it's shining like the sun! His voice – it's like the sound of rushing waters! Wow!

But now, what does He say? He says, "I'm with you! I'm with you always!" He's standing "among the lampstands." So as you walk into your week, you don't walk into your week alone – Jesus, the all-powerful One – He goes with you! And if you go up into the air? Jesus, the all-powerful One, goes with you! And if you go overseas? Jesus, the all-powerful One, goes with you! He walks with you to school, to work, He's with you in your homes, He walks with you to the doctor's office! He-the all-powerful One – He walks with you! He walks with you now – and He'll walk with you forever! And . . . He loves you!

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So my brothers and sisters – God’s message to you and me today is, “Never be afraid again!” Never! Why so? Never be afraid because your God – He’s all-powerful! Your God – He died for you! Your God – He rose for you on Easter! Your God – He’s with you! And most importantly, your God – He loves you! Never be afraid again! Amen.

Romans 15:13 May the God of all hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.