

## **Sermon Reading: Revelation 1:4b-8**

*Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne,<sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,<sup>6</sup> and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

<sup>7</sup> *“Look, he is coming with the clouds,”  
and “every eye will see him,  
even those who pierced him”;  
and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.”  
So shall it be! Amen.*

<sup>8</sup> *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

## **Sermon Theme: Look, Your King is Coming**

The battle has turned to the worst. They had fought and pushed but the enemy's numbers were just too great. Wave upon wave keeps coming and they can't keep up. From what anyone could see, it seems the enemy has won and hope had lost. But it's in that moment of what seems to be all-but-certain defeat when the king rides in as he promised. With his sword in out-stretched hand, the king comes with hope riding on his wings. There was never really a chance for that wicked enemy; the king had to return. And when the king arrived, those enemies at the gate who had rejected him, who fought against him, who wanted nothing to do with him, they knew when they saw the king it was too late for them and they were lost. It's a common story line in many books and movies from epics like *Lord of the Rings* and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* to the super-hero movies and even romantic comedies: hope has faded to almost nothing and the hero rides in to save the day.

Maybe we are attracted to that storyline because God's people—we—are in a battle. And during this battle God has warned us in his Word that sin and evil will continue to get worse leading up to that Last Day. It will seem that all hope is gone when the love of most will grow cold. But when the time is right, at the end, your King Jesus will come. For many they do not want Jesus to be their king and reject him. But that does not change the fact that Jesus is their king who will return to judge and to save. As we plan for the end: look, your King is coming.

John writes this letter to seven churches in the province of Asia what is present-day western Turkey. As with many of the Christian churches during this time, these churches to whom John is writing are struggling against increased hostility against Christianity, persecution, and the temptations that come along with it. As he begins this letter that we call “Revelation” John gives the common greeting for that time: “Grace and peace to you.” But when the apostles write these greetings, they aren’t just saying, “Dear, so-and-so” or a churchy “Hello.” John is really summarizing the gifts these churches have as people of God. Grace is a summary of all the gifts of God’s love that comes to us through Jesus Christ. Peace sums up all that is ours as a result of that grace.

We understand it this way because of how John continues with explaining where this grace and peace is coming from. He writes, **“Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”** From him who is, who was, and is to come would ring in the ears of especially his Jewish readers. This is speaking God’s proper name that he gave to Moses at the burning bush in the Old Testament. This is “I Am”, God the Father. This grace and peace also comes from the seven spirits before God’s throne. This is an interesting way to speak of the Holy Spirit who God sends out in Word and Sacrament to work faith in people’s hearts. And finally this grace and peace comes from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, firstborn from the dead, and ruler of the kings of the earth. Grace and peace, John could be saying, you have it and the Triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—continues to send it.

It can be all-too easy to chalk up these words “Grace and peace to you” as another one of those nice phrases someone throws out at you during a hard time but doesn’t mean too much. Because we all have those moments in life that there doesn’t seem to be a lot of peace. It might be the seemingly constant doctor’s appointments or the rat-race of trying to get a house in some resemblance of order. There might be a lack of peace because of struggles at work or difficulties at home. Being pulled in a number of different directions with everyone’s expectations and your various responsibilities can rob you of peace of mind. It might not even be in your house but you know of what a friend or loved one has to deal with in their life and it’s keeping you from having peace because you don’t know what to do for them.

There may be times in your life where you wonder how much of God’s love—his grace—you really have. When we struggle with thoughts of past sins or continued struggles against sin, one might wonder how much God could love them. Or when

struggling with the lack of peace one can start to wonder if God really does care or really is present in our lives.

These obstacles can then get in the way for us from seeing that God has given and continues to give to us his grace and peace. And when we struggle with this, we struggle with seeing how Jesus can be our king.

As stated earlier, some outright reject Jesus as king and want nothing to do with him and his Word. They don't see a need for him and don't have the time of day for him. But it's not just them. Even when we know better, we struggle with this too. We are saying we don't want Jesus to rule our hearts whenever we follow our own will instead of God's will. Our sinful nature fights against Jesus as king as we are tempted to try and find peace in other ways in our life by ignoring sinful actions and attitudes. Instead of correcting a pet sin, we do it again because it makes us feel better for a little bit of time. We let addictions rule over us. We make compromises that lead us away from following God's will. Instead of Christ being king, I want him to bend to my will and what I want.

The problem with this is that, yes, for a time, when we do those things there may be more peace. They tend to give us more instantaneous relief and gratification in the moment. But then what? If we stand back and look at what causes us that lack of peace in life, very often it can be traced back to certain decisions we make. Yes, very often there's a lack of peace because someone else has done something to hurt us emotionally, physically, or mentally. But we also must recognize and confess that all too often instead of following God's will—having Jesus as my king—I wanted to be king and rule. And then we quickly and too easily blame others and get upset with God when things aren't going the way we want it to. This shouldn't come as a surprise; God's Word teaches: **the sinful mind is hostile towards Gods; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so** (Romans 8:7). By nature we do not want Jesus to be king. We are his enemy and really don't want his peace or love.

And still that king, rejected by his own, **loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood**. Jesus' battle wasn't against flesh and blood but our greatest enemies of sin, death, and the devil. His love for you is ever present and does not wax or wane depending on his mood. He came to break those chains of sin that enslaved us. Sin has no power here and does not control you. He has lifted those heavy chains of guilt and shame from your neck and, with his blood, Jesus has freed you.

Because of that sin the payment that was owed and deserved was death on earth and eternal death and suffering in hell. But Jesus took your place; making the payment with his blood, Jesus suffered the pains of hell on the cross, and died your

death. And having been raised from the dead, your king has set you free from death's steely grip. God's people fall asleep in Jesus' name to be with the Lord forever. Death is now just a doorway that God opens to welcome his people into his waiting arms.

No longer are we chained to the devil and his whims and desires. Yes, he can still attack and is quite the formidable foe. But he's only able to do what God allows him. He's a dog on a leash; still vicious but not running rampant. It's not a battle of good verse evil on this earth. Good has already won. It was as good as over when God first promised to Adam and Eve that he would send a Savior. Yes, the devil bit Jesus' heel, but Jesus crushed the serpent Satan's head on the cross.

This is your king Jesus Christ: he is the faithful witness who has revealed to you the truth in his Word. And it's by that same Word that he not only frees you but also, as John writes, **has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father** (v.6). As his priest, you have the assurance of being able to go to God's throne with your prayers and he answers you. You have been set free so you don't need to try and be a better person or earn God's love. You already are and have it. And so we serve God and our neighbor without expectations or demands. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead who sacrificed himself for you and was raised from the dead to give you life with him. He is the ruler of the kings of the earth, all things have been placed under his feet, and he rules over all for the good of you, his church, and his people.

When the King comes with the clouds every eye will see him. Those who pierced him, rejected him as king—who do not have saving faith in their hearts—they will recognize the haunting truth. They will mourn in disbelief, beat their chests because what they refused to believe was always true. At that time, their never-ending horrible fate stares them in the face when the King returns.

But for us God's people, those who have been made priests and are part of his kingdom, we have certain hope. Even when all looks hopeless and it seems that God's enemies are prevailing, we know and believe that our King is coming. Your king is Jesus—the Alpha and Omega, he is Lord who is and was and is to come. He is the Almighty. His grace—underserved love—he gives to you freely. From that grace we have a peace that surpasses understanding—peace with God that sins are paid for and washed away, peace from our troubled consciences that even the guilt has been taken away, and peace for our hearts and souls that the troubles and difficulties of this world—albeit very difficult right now—they are temporary and pale in comparison to what awaits us in heaven. To the one whose love is never-

ending and ever-patient, to him the glory and power forever and ever! Until our King returns, God's people all say, "Amen. Come Lord Jesus." Amen.