

Revelation 1:4-18April 15, 2007 – 2nd SUNDAY OF EASTER**Grace and Peace from the A and the Ω**† **Resurrected Ruler (vv.4-8)**† **Wonderful Word (vv.9-11)**† **Glorious God (vv.12-18)**

In the name of Jesus, crucified and risen, dear rejoicing believers:

Some of you may wonder about our worship folder where this sermon's theme reads: "Grace and Peace from the A and the W." Yes, this is the season when A&W reopens. And I have happy memories of A&W with my older brother and our first boss who enjoyed taking us boys for root beer floats after delivering his Fuller Brush catalogs. And maybe somewhere like A&W we'd love to spend quiet lives. But besides the waistline, there is the reality that life is not a bowl of cherries or a tall cool whatever.

So if you believe God's Word that "*we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God*" (Acts 14:22 NIV), you'll be glad to know the true theme behind that computer glitch. For all of our high tech blessings, computers remain ignorant machines that sometimes change Greek fonts into English letters. As we begin this series on Revelation, the Holy Spirit is bringing us **Grace and Peace from the A (Alpha) and the Ω (Omega)**. For living in His Easter victory, this means **Grace and Peace from the ...**

† **Resurrected Ruler (vv.4-8)**

Another name for "Revelation" is "Apocalypse," a type of literature from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, which used fantastic imagery to reveal divine truth. The opening verse says God gave this Apocalypse of Jesus Christ to show us, His servants, what would soon happen. Literally, He "signified (σημαίνω) it by his angel unto his servant John." Few translations beside the King James and the New King James Version tell us English readers this book is meant to be figurative. Its twenty-two chapters contain numbers and symbols of what God says will happen throughout the New Testament era until Christ returns. It's like a camera shooting down here, then toward heaven – trouble below, glory above.

Imagine being a Christian as God was predicting severe persecution. You work hard for food and clothing, for a roof over your head to provide for your family, but the government take your property and sometimes even your life. We get upset at bad medical news; they barely had medicine. We worry about losing our job; many then had to gather sticks for firewood. We fret about being late through airport security. If they got to sail, pirates of the Mediterranean could kidnap and kill if a raging storm didn't drown them first. In life's troubles then and now we Christians wonder, "Who's really in charge?"

"Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come," the Father; *"and from the seven spirits before his throne,"* the Holy Spirit; *"and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth."* Don't worry and fret for your sins or for your future. Instead be filled with praise *"to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 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."* Sooner now, *"Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'"* No power can defeat Him then or now because Jesus is the...

† **Wonderful Word (vv.9-11)**

When I was a boy as our family was first joining the Wisconsin Synod, I used to wonder how the pastors could be so cheerful all the time. Were their wives so beautiful and their lives so easy that never a tear would fall? Did they understand what the rest of us had to go through day after day?

Here's a reality check from the apostle-pastor: ***“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”*** What did he do wrong? Under Roman law preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ earned exile on a prison island. By now perhaps John was the last surviving apostle after all the rest were killed for preaching this faith of Christ-crucified and risen. The disciple Jesus loved was suffering. Yet he wanted to remind his fellow Christians that they were all part of God's family, “brothers” by virtue of their Baptism, and “companions” in the Kingdom of Christ that would never be destroyed. Theirs was the heritage of ***“patient endurance,”*** standing up under the cross of Christ until His time came to free them from their burdens by His **Wonderful Word**.

Our sin is not trusting God's Word. Sure, we give it lip service. We say we want a church that teaches God's Word in its truth and purity. But who of us reaches first for our Bibles when heartache and trouble come knocking? Who of us doesn't wake up with worries burbling like French fries in grease? Who doesn't feel so glum that not even a Minnesota morning can pierce the shades?

Grace and Peace from the A and the Ω. God's own Son brings us His undeserved love. And when He plants it in our hearts by Word and sacraments, we enjoy as a free gift of His grace, that ***“peace which surpasses all understanding that guards [our] hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus.”*** (Philippians 4:7) Strengthened and encouraged by God's **Wonderful Word**, John was ready to write ***“to the seven churches [of] Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”***

† **Glorious God (vv.12-18)**

This week read those little letters in Revelation 2, 3. You'll see why the members of those congregations would not like everything they heard. They would all receive this entire Revelation, but some would be told they were lukewarm and ready to be spit out of God's mouth. Some were looking so alive in active congregations, but God said they were spiritually dead. Some had found a compromise with their pagan persecutors, but God condemned the “Nicolaitans” for their unfaithful pagan practices and called them to repentance. Maybe you can see why some people get scared reading Revelation.

Then imagine you're John in a cave or grotto on that island seeing this Sunday vision. You turn around at the voice speaking to you: ***“I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone ‘like a son of man,’ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 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.”*** Later John will hear that the *seven stars* are the angel-messengers, or pastors in those congregation, held safe and secure in the Lord's hands. And the ***“seven lampstands”*** where Jesus walks? They are the seven congregations receiving these letters.

John fell into a dead heap at Jesus' feet. But the Lord used the same word of kindness that lets us worship Him as our **Glorious God**: ***“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”*** ***“Do not be afraid”*** took away the fear of our first parents, Adam and Eve, with God's promise of a Savior. ***“Do not be afraid”*** calmed the fears of those shepherds outside of Bethlehem and sent them to see our Savior born of the virgin Mary and lying in a manger. By **Grace** our **Glorious God** has made us heirs with Jesus who rose **First**, so that we too will rise. When time has past and earth is gone, Jesus will be the **Last** remaining **Ruler** to welcome us home to heaven to enjoy eternal life with Him forever. He has locked the door on ***“death and hell”*** for all who trust in Him as their Savior from sin. With undeserved love like that from God, you and I can look at these symbolic images in Revelation, blessed by their warning and blessed by the promise of good from God for all His children. Life is not an A&W root beer stand. Better by far, we have **Grace and Peace from the A and the Ω** – our **Resurrected Ruler**, the **Wonderful Word**, our **Glorious God**. Peace to all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

For the study behind this sermon or for copies email m.cordes@comast.net .
You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.wels.us/newlife .

New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church
180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126