

Grace and Peace from the Risen Christ

✦ We worship Him in triumph. (vv.4-6)

✦ We wait for His coming. (vv.7-8)

In the Name of our crucified, risen and glorious Savior Jesus Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Isn't it amazing how we human beings can mess things up? Once I was carefully explaining to my little brother and sister not to spill the banana split I just bought them in Mom's car. They listened until Ramona said very respectfully, "Mark, you're tipping yours. It's about to spill on your lap."

Dreadfully amazing is how theologians can muck up Bible interpretation, even some who – Thank God! – do recognize the Bible is God's Word, inspired and inerrant. Any of us can easily get things backwards. What's supposed to be literal, some take figuratively; the figurative some want to interpret literally. Today's text from Revelation can look murky to us. What can make these waters clear? Answer: First, don't stir them up. Then let the words stand as God gives them. The first verse of Revelation literally says, "*God showed his servants what had to happen in a short time, and he symbolized (ἔσήμανεν) it, sending his angel to his servant John.*" Scripture interprets Scripture. God's Word makes itself clear to us through other Bible passages. God wants us to understand because He has a very specific goal in mind. God wants to give us **Grace and Peace from the Risen Christ**.

✦ We worship Him in triumph. (vv.4-6)

"*John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia....*" Find them up on a map of Asia Minor, what is now Turkey, and you can see these were real Christian churches. They had members and pastors and problems like churches today. In Revelation 2, 3, the Holy Spirit inspired a short letter to each to help them stay faithful to Jesus. Again, this is all because God wanted to give them this awesome gift.

"*Grace and peace to you....*" Years ago a short-lived TV series named *Lazarus Man* had an episode dealing with "grace." So depressing! They kept asking, "Are you worthy of grace?" Like so many churches today, the religious group in the show was trying to say that you must be worthy of "grace" before God will give it. Meanwhile, the Bible says to Christians, "*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins....For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*" (Ephesians 2:1,8f) Sin-dead corpses cannot be "worthy of grace." That's why the Bible shows us that *grace* is God's undeserved love. Even more precisely, *grace* is that special quality in God's heart that makes Him pity and save sinners. God's *grace* is totally independent of yours or my reaction to it. *Grace* is! *Grace* gives!

And wherever God's *grace* lives, there we find it's sweet, sweet fruit: God's *peace*. This is so much greater than "peace" between nations. God's *peace* results where God ended the war between us sinners and His holiness. Our whole Lenten season was leading to God's Good Friday sacrifice for sin that washed it all away with Christ's holy, precious blood. Easter morning **triumph** confirmed it. When God's *peace* rules your heart, guilt runs away, turmoil dies, and life is a **triumph** of God's sweet *grace*.

All this comes from the Triune God. The Father is identified first: "*Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come.*" God is absolutely unchangeable. The LORD revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, "*I AM WHO I AM.*" (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה) His Name Yahweh literally means, "The One Who Is" – as opposed to all the idols people make up in their minds. God's unchanging love means He cares as much for us today as yesterday and still will tomorrow. From all eternity God's *grace* has been working to bring us His **peace from the Risen Christ**.

“The sevenfold Spirit” (NIV84 f.n.) is doing His awesome work with Word and sacrament. We see evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work today as our young brother, Nathan Dott, is ready to publicly confess his faith. The Holy Spirit brought Nate to faith in Baptism and has used God’s Word at home, in faithful church attendance and more recently with instructions in the *Simplified Catechism* to strengthen and confirm his faith. The angels around God’s throne will be rejoicing with us today at Nate’s Confirmation.

“Grace and peace to you” from God the Father, from God the Holy Spirit, and **“from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness....”** Everything God wanted Jesus to reveal about God to us, Jesus did. God’s loving kindness and tender mercy were always on display in Jesus’ life and ministry. But so was God’s wrath at sin, His anger at anything fake or hypocritical. All that sin of ours was crucified with Christ on the cross. All sin is forgiven because Jesus is **“the firstborn from the dead.”** How beautiful! **“Firstborn”** means Jesus is one of us, the perfect, sinless Son of God born of the Virgin Mary. **“Firstborn”** means more will follow in glorious resurrection for all who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Since Jesus even is **“the ruler of the kings of the earth,”** it’s so comforting that He **“loves us.”** All the warmth and tenderness of a mother’s love, the strength and confidence of a father’s love, far beyond the best a human heart can offer – that is God’s *unconditional, self-sacrificing love* demonstrated in this: **“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** (Romans 5:8) Before we could even think about trying to be “worthy of grace,” God’s grace already got it done. Τετέλεσται – **“It is finished.”**

How can we help it? **We worship Him in triumph.** Jesus has made us **“to be a kingdom,”** ruling with Him by our prayers from God’s right hand on the throne of heaven. Since He also made us royal **“priests,”** we can come to God directly by faith in Jesus. He is the only Mediator we need, no saints, no one else, just Jesus, and not only praying for ourselves but for everyone, for our city, church, our country as we **“serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”**

✠ **We wait for His coming. (vv.7-8)**

But **wait!** This sermon isn’t over yet. You are preaching the rest of this sermon every day of your life as you eagerly **wait for His coming.** We keep calling to our community, we keep saying quietly to our friends and family, **“Look, he is coming with the clouds.”** Just as the angels said to His disciples after Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives: **“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”** (Acts 1:11 NIV84)

Some still insist they do not believe in Jesus. They think the Bible is corrupted, as if it’s no better than their own books, newspapers, magazines. But you know the answer for everyone who says, “I don’t believe.” Just look them in the eye and say respectfully, “You will, my friend, you will. I hope and pray you believe in Jesus before it’s too late because **‘every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.’**”

That’s such a gory word in the original Greek. But it explains why Jesus could say to Thomas, **“Reach out your hand and put it into my side.”** (John 20:27) **“Pierced”** in the Holy Spirit’s Greek original literally means *to dig out a hole.* Apparently, the soldier thrust and twisted the spear through Jesus’ heart and lung to make sure He was dead. That was his job. But on Judgment Day that same soldier will see the One whose side he *dug out* with his spear. Hopefully, he was one who like the Roman Centurion confessed, **“Truly this was the Son of God!”** (Matthew 27:54) For all who fail to repent during their time of grace in this life will not get a second chance. Every day now is a “second chance.” That’s why we say, “While there’s life, there’s hope.” But if they refuse to repent and believe, God will finally give them their wish to be without Him. And that’s why **“all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him.”** Is this doubtful? Not at all! **“So shall it be! Amen,”** says the Lord God.

But Jesus is not done with us as we live out the rest of this sermon. **“I AM the Alpha and the Omega,”** the “A to Z,” **“says the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”** No one can snatch us from His powerful hands, pierced for us, ruling in glory. **We wait for His coming** even as we enjoy **Grace and Peace from the Risen Christ.** Let your life be the **Amen,** yes, Amen!

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