

Fear Not

Revelation 1:4-18

Introduction

Everyone of us has something that scares us. Two years ago, we had a new thing to fear, COVID. Some are still living in fear of that. For me, personally, when I look around and see the direction the world is going and think about my grandchildren, I fear for them. But I don't live in fear. I trust them into God's care. I know He will take care of them and protect them. That may sound simplistic to many people. Either I am just saying words, or if I really do believe what I am saying, I am just deluding myself. I'm just being a Pollyanna.

Fear and the Bible

The truth is, I am a firm believer in *Sola Scriptura*, the Bible is my sole authority for life. I believe this because the Bible is the Word of God and God doesn't lie. The Bible tells me not to live in fear. (Read **1 John 4:16-18**). We don't have to fear because God loves us, His love is perfect, and His perfect love casts out fear. The only thing to fear is judgment. And those of us living in Christ do not worry about judgment. He has faced the judgment for us. It's not just because the Bible says, "Don't be afraid" that I choose not to fear. But Christ Himself says it (Read **Luke 12:32-34**). When our faith is in Christ, He directs us to a different way of looking at life. He directs us to look to Himself. In our **Revelation** reading, we see just Who Jesus is as He cares for us and keeps us from living in fear.

The First and the Last

Jesus identifies Himself as the *First and the Last* (**Revelation 1:17**). John was well versed in the Hebrew **Scriptures**. When Jesus introduced Himself as the First and the Last, John would have thought of this verse from **Isaiah**. (Read **Isaiah 44:6**). Jesus identifies Himself as the Lord, Israel's Redeemer, and King. Jesus is our God, our Redeemer, our King.

The Living One

He goes on to call Himself the *Living One* (**v. 18**). Throughout the Bible God is referred to as the living God to set Himself apart from all other gods. All false gods and idols are dead, made by man. Who or what do you put your faith in? Your bank account? The government? Science? All of these are made by man and will fail. They are dead gods, worthless idols. Jesus Christ is the one true living God.

Who Died and Is Now Alive Forevermore

What sets Christianity apart from all other world religions is that our God died for us and still lives. No other god has done that. We continue to celebrate His resurrection. When Jesus stepped out of the tomb, he had a new, glorified, immortal body. He was raised to die no more! He is the one *who died and is alive forevermore* (**v. 18**). He is always there for us—Immanuel.

Has the Keys of Death and Hades

Because He has conquered death by rising from the dead, *He has the keys of Death and Hades (v. 18)*. That is, He has control over them. Death is separation of body from soul. Hades is the abode of the immortal soul when it is separated from the body. The Hebrews called it Sheol. It could be Paradise or Gehenna. Through His death and resurrection, Christ has conquered and gained control over death and where our soul goes when we die.

The Crucified, Risen Christ

This is all possible because Jesus is the crucified, risen Christ. Attendance at church soars for Easter Sunday, but not so much for Maundy Thursday or Good Friday. Why? People like stories with happy endings. They want to hear the good part, the happy part. They want to rejoice. They don't like to mourn. But when they skip the sad part, the depressing part, the hard part, they only get half the story. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ must never be separated. They are two sides of the same coin. They work together. A cross without an empty tomb would leave Jesus a martyr instead of a Savior. There would be no life in Christ. Likewise, it would be impossible to have a resurrection without a crucifixion. If Jesus had just died a natural death, there would be no sacrifice, no forgiveness of sins. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ validates the truth that God who is now present in the exalted Christ is the only true God, Creator, and Judge/Redeemer.

Means of Grace

Because Christ is risen and lives forevermore, we receive His body and blood when we, in faith, eat the bread and drink the wine at Communion. Through this, all our fears are calmed, life is good, and we can say, "Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!"

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
