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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
November 29, 2015
1st Sunday in Advent

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 1:68-79

Hymns: 55; 65; 56; 377:10 (Gloria -6)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Revelation 1:4-8

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁷Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, Our Coming Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Living in Expectation

That is what the Advent season is really all about. We live in expectation. We are waiting; we are watching for something to happen. We are looking for Christ's coming.

We associate this season with Christmas and the celebration of Jesus' birth not only because Advent leads up to Christmas but because that is one of the ways that Christ came into the world. He was born of the Virgin Mary. Faithful children of God, such as Zacharias and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna, were all living in expectation. They were watching and waiting for the coming Messiah, the Christ, even as we are yet today, and so they rejoiced at the Savior's birth as Christians have done continually ever since. But we still live in expectation for this was but the first coming of the Christ. Now we watch and now we wait for the second coming of the Lord. So this morning as we begin another Advent season let us consider --

THEME: The Lord Who Is to Come!

Let us consider first

I. Who He Is.

Revelation 1:4-5^a “Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.”

He is the One who brings to us grace and peace from the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In these opening words of our text the eternal nature of the Father is described for us. He is the One who is and who was and who is to come. We also have the Holy Spirit presented in a symbolic way with the number seven. Seven is the number that signified the interaction between God and man. God initiates this interaction by the working of His Holy Spirit that we might know that grace and peace which God bestows upon a sinful mankind in the greatness of His love for us.

Then we have presented to us Jesus Christ as the One sent to us from God. Jesus is called “faithful witness.” He communicates to us that which was given Him by the Father. He presents to mankind the truth that we need about God that we might be saved.

He reveals the Father to us as no one else can. Jesus Christ is the faithful witness. He is the One concerning whom God the Father declared, “**Hear Him!**”

Beyond this Jesus is described here as being “**the firstborn among the dead.**” We are reminded of the truth about Jesus that He not only died but that He rose again and ascended to the right hand of God. He is the firstborn among the dead not only in that Jesus is the first to have permanently risen from the dead to live forevermore, but also in the quality of being the best of all that would rise from the dead. You see, Jesus is Lord of all, and so superior to all that we cannot even compare ourselves to Him.

That He is the firstborn of the dead also assumes that others would rise. There is a resurrection from the dead, and it will include all flesh who have died. Jesus as our Risen and ever-living Lord demonstrates the truth of resurrection.

Finally, this verse reminds us that Jesus rules the world. He is Ruler over the kings of the earth. This is a truth we need to keep before us as we watch the news, and we hear all these reports of despots and dictators and terrorists who appear to be in charge of so much of the world. They are on a short leash, a very short leash indeed. The Lord Jesus is the One who has a firm hold on that leash so that they can go so far and no farther. They can go only so far as their actions serve His purposes for directing human events whether it is to exalt or to humble nations, so that His gospel may go forth in the world, and His kingdom may be expanded for the salvation of souls.

But let us not forget that before our text closes Jesus speaks concerning His own identity. He uses a very similar expression already used by God the Father, an expression that makes Jesus’ divine nature abundantly clear.

Revelation 1:8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End,*” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega. These letters that begin and end the Greek alphabet make it clear that Jesus is all in all. Apart from

Jesus there is nothing. It also makes it clear that when Jesus declares that He is also the beginning and the end, and that He “is and was and is to come,” that He is the eternal God, the Maker of all things. He is the One who will come again at the end of the world, but the truth of that event cannot be discussed without first knowing –

II. What He Has Done, that is What He has accomplished.

Jesus has done what no one else ever could have done. Our text communicates to us the wonder of the gospel of Christ in the words of a doxology.

Revelation 1:5^b-6 To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

First He loved us. He loved us since before the world began. He loved us when we had done nothing good. He loved even in our sinful state, when we would be our most unlovable. Jesus “**has loved us and given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God**” (Ephesians 5:2).

By that act of love we were purified. He washed away the stain of our sin with the cleansing power of His blood, the blood He shed upon the cross. Nothing else could have accomplished what the Prophet Isaiah promised in his first chapter:

Isaiah 1:18 “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.”

He purified us for a purpose. Jesus purified us so that we might qualify to serve as priests before God. This is where the impact of Jesus first coming is seen. In the days of the Old Covenant the Aaronic priesthood was maintained. They had to go before God as intermediaries presenting the people’s offerings and prayers to God, and bring God’s message of peace back to the people. That is the way it had to be because the stain of sin, the guilt and shame of sin, the taint of death coming from sin disqualified the people from

coming before God. The effect of Jesus washing us with His own blood and making us pure is that the way to God has been opened to us. We also may serve as priests presenting prayers to God directly with only Christ as our Mediator.

What Jesus put in place is the power of His kingdom. He calls us kings, not because we rule in a temporal manner, in a way understood by the world, but because we rule with Christ in a spiritual manner. As we bring our prayers to Him for His guidance and protection, as we seek His blessing upon our testimony of the gospel, He hears and acts on those prayers. We are blessed by Jesus, and the cause of Christ is advanced in this world as we serve also as His agents and messenger of the grace of God. All of this is included in the hastening of the Lord's return. When the gospel has been preached to the ends of the world, and the last of the elect has been called to faith, then we shall witness --

III. What He Shall Do upon His Return.

Revelation 1:7 "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen."

Jesus is the One who is to come. He is coming again. He will come even as the disciples watched Him ascend into heaven and the clouds received Him out of their sight. So He will come with the clouds. He will descend from the heavens, and every eye shall see Him. He will return visibly. There is no need for us to go to Jerusalem, or some other holy mountain in some distant land to see this glorious event. Jesus will appear before all the world. Every believer and every unbeliever will see the Lord. That will be true not only of those who are then alive on the earth. That will be true of all who ever lived. All shall see Him, because with Jesus' second coming will come the resurrection of all the dead. Even those who pierced His hands and feet with nails, who pierced His side with a spear so that His holy precious blood flowed forth from His body to be spilled upon the ground, they also shall see the Lord! They shall see and they shall mourn His coming. For them it will not be good! They shall see Him and they shall tremble!

Our text declares that all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of Him. They shall mourn when Jesus returns in glory because they neglected the day of His visitation. They did not believe in Him who died for them and rose again. They will mourn because they each turned to their own way, and spurned the grace of God that was offered them in Christ's first coming. The child of God shall rejoice at His coming.

So what shall it be for us, a day of mourning or a day of rejoicing? Let us not neglect the grace of God that has been given us and the opportunity we have now in this time to serve the Lord with gladness and to come before His presence with singing.

So often the neglect isn't the end for the generation that is present now, but rather it is part of slip, a progressive sliding away from the truth. As one reviews Bible History that is what is seen in the history of Israel. Every time the people repented it took only three or four generations for that slipping away from the Lord to take hold. So it is with our human nature that we neglect the one thing needful in favor of things that enhance our temporal lives and material existence. It is a painful thing to see this trend among those we love, to see them neglect the gospel not only to their loss but to the spiritual harm of their children. Let us be diligent to impress upon our children and also for the sake of our grandchildren the importance of being diligent in watching for the Lord's appearing. May that day come upon us finding us in a state of eager anticipation of the Lord's coming, that we not be found among those mourning the loss of what might have been the day of our salvation .

Conclusion: His coming is a sure and certain thing.

The closing verse of our text which we already referenced concerning Jesus' person is important for us also because it establishes the certainty of Jesus's coming.

Revelation 1:8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End,*” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

This testimony of Jesus concerning Himself commands our attention. He is the eternal God. He is Jesus, the Son of Man and the Son of God. As surely as He was born of the Virgin Mary and lived on this earth is an undeniable truth, so sure and certain is the fact of His reappearing. He is the Almighty! What He promises shall come to pass. Let us live in expectation and hope, watching for the Lord's glorious return.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.