

Sermon for Easter 2 (Series C)

Text: Revelation 1:9-19

Preached on 04-15-2007

Introduction:

Isn't it wonderful that we are gathered here today, celebrating our faith and worshiping the Risen Lord without fear. This sort of open and free worship would never be possible in China. It is actually against Chinese law to practice the Christian faith there. If you're discovered doing so, it will most certainly result in being arrested and possibly executed. In spite of all the danger, however, there are quite a few practicing Christians in China. There is even a group called "*Friends of China*" whose sole purpose it is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with as many Chinese citizens as possible. What if they share the Gospel with the wrong person? What if they are discovered? Needless to say, they are extremely careful and live every single day in fear.

The Christians living in the first century also lived their lives in fear and dread. Because they confessed their faith in the Risen Christ and secretly worshiped Him, their lives were in constant danger. As real as their fear was, they had the perfect cure. Christians across the world, especially in China, have the same cure today. Because of this cure,

Series Theme: We Sing Our Alleluias to the Resurrected Lord!

Today we sing our Alleluias because...

Theme: The Resurrected Lord Drives Out Fear!

Part I: The fear of earthly persecution

Part II: The fear of eternal damnation

Background:

The Christian church began to experience persecution shortly after Pentecost. Jesus' own disciples were imprisoned. This persecution intensified over time. As the Roman Emperor Nero grew in power, many more Christians were put to death. In later years, the persecution of Christians became even harsher and more widespread. This book, Revelation, is more or less a letter of encouragement written to the seven churches in the province of Asia Minor, which were also experiencing fierce persecution. Some believers were slain (**Revelation 6:9**) while others were beheaded (**Revelation 20:4**). What was their crime? Believing in, worshiping, and singing their "Alleluias" to the Resurrected Lord!

Part I: The fear of earthly persecution

While proclaiming the Risen Christ at Ephesus, Christ's enemies banished the Apostle John to a barren island called Patmos. While consumed with the fear of what would happen to him on this island, Jesus Himself appeared to him.

After being instructed to write down everything he was about to see, the Apostle John turned around to see who was speaking to him. He saw, **"Seven golden lampstands" (v. 12)**. These lampstands represented the very churches that were facing all that fierce persecution, the very congregations that this letter (Revelation) was addressed to. In the middle of these seven churches stood Jesus Himself (v. 13)! He was dressed in kingly robes (v. 13). His head and hair were, **"White like wool, as white as snow" (v. 14)**. This whiteness symbolized Jesus' absolute holiness. His eyes were, **"Like blazing fire" (v. 14)**, symbolizing His ability to see into the innermost, secret regions of human hearts. His feet were like, **"Bronze glowing in the furnace" (v. 15)**, symbolizing His power and authority over all His enemies. His voice was like the, **"Rushing waters" (v. 15)** of a crashing tidal wave. In His right hand He held, **"Seven stars" (v. 16)**, representing the pastors of the seven churches John addressed this letter to. Coming out of the Lord's mouth was, **"A sharp double-edged sword" (v. 16)**, representing the Law and Gospel of His Holy Word.

Application:

This picture of the holy, omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipotent (all-powerful) Jesus standing in the midst of His Church shows that He is still in control of everything. And yet how quick we are to think that He isn't in control of anything! Whenever trouble or hardship enter our lives; whenever we see good, Christian people hurting or in need; whenever we're told to keep our faith and beliefs to ourselves, it seems as though God is nowhere around. We are quick to ask, "Where are You God? Don't You care? Don't You understand the dangers we face and the fears we have?" It's funny that we should ask such questions. Those are essentially the same questions asked by all the martyred (murdered) believers of the past. Night and day they cry out from Heaven, **"How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood" (Revelation 6:10)?**

Yes, our Lord knows very well the things that we're going through. But even better than knowing about them, He's busy doing something about them! Even though He has certainly earned a well-deserved rest, our

Risen Lord is not on vacation! He's not up in Heaven kicking back and taking it easy. He is with us! He is actively involved in our lives! He is working hard in our world, performing so many miracles that, **"Even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written"** (John 21:25). Isn't it awesome to know that nothing, and I mean absolutely nothing, happens to us without the Risen Lord's say-so? Even when He does allow difficult times and persecution to come into our lives, we can rest assured that He will work, **"All things (good and bad)"** (Romans 8:28) for our eternal good. That means there is a divine PURPOSE for every trouble and problem we endure in this life. Talk about driving out the fear of earthly persecution!

Transition:

The Resurrected Lord coming to John on the island of Patmos strengthened him in his faith and reassured him of God's love. Suddenly his fear of earthly persecution was gone. In addition to driving out John's fear of earthly persecution, the Resurrected Lord also drove out...

Part II: The fear of eternal damnation

Adam and Eve were the first two people to ever experience fear. And boy did they experience it! What reason did Adam give for hiding from the Lord? Adam explained, **"I heard You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid"** (Genesis 3:10). Who did Adam think he was talking to? Who was he trying to fool? His fear had nothing to do with being found naked. Adam and Eve were hiding because they were afraid of being found, period. They had sinned against the Lord. Just like Satan had promised, they now understood right from wrong and they knew that they had done wrong. Even more terrifying was who they had done wrong against. Adam and Eve were terrified to face their maker, a holy and just God.

This vision was meant to encourage John at a very difficult, trying time. And yet, at first it was all too much for him. When turning and finding himself standing before the holy and just God, his reaction was really no different from that of Adam and Eve. He, **"Fell at His feet as though dead"** (v. 17). Who wouldn't? Can you imagine such a thing?

Application:

The day is coming when we won't have to imagine. The Day when you and I find ourselves in John's situation will be here soon enough. It will be real enough too. We may even tremble at the Lord's feet in fear of His divine judgment. How relieved will we be, though, when we feel the

warm touch of our Savior's hand and hear His gentle voice say, **“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”** (vv. 17-18)? Because of these words, we can approach our Last Day in fearless confidence. Why? Jesus served our sentence in Hell (**Matthew 27:46**)! He died to make a full and sufficient sacrifice for all our sins, saying with His dying breath, **“It is finished”** (**John 19:30**). He announced His victory in Satan's own backyard as He, **“Preached to the spirits in the prison of Hell”** (**1 Peter 3:19**). And then, He rose again to prove His victory over sin, death, and the devil. Now our risen and living Savior says to you and me, **“Because I live, you also will live”** (**John 14:19**).

Shouldn't we, then, out deep, reverent gratitude want to go and share this wonderful news with as many people as possible? If we had discovered the cure for cancer, wouldn't we go and share that cure with as many afflicted people as we could? Of course, “YES”! Well guess what? We have a cure to share! We aren't talking about a disease that afflicts a mere percentage of people either. We are talking about a disease that kills and takes all people to eternal damnation (**Romans 6:23a**). Sin is the disease. Jesus is the cure! Jesus is the **ONLY WAY** (**John 14:6**) there is to approach a holy and just God with fearless confidence, knowing that we will receive a, “Not Guilty” verdict from Him. Talk about driving out the fear of eternal damnation!

Conclusion:

When exiled to the island of Patmos, John may not have thought there was a whole lot to rejoice over or sing about. He may have wondered, “Is this it? Is my ministry in Ephesus over? Is this how my life is going to end?” In the middle of those frightful thoughts and feelings the Lord Jesus Himself came, stood in his presence, and announced, “No, I am with you!” He came and boosted John with a message that revealed His power and his pardon. He came and gave John a message that was enriching to the seven churches struggling over in Asia Minor. He came and gave John a message that serves as God's final Word to the human race. It's a message that really sums up everything God wants us to know and all that we need to know concerning our Salvation. It's a message that centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Resurrected Lord drives out the fear of earthly persecution. The Resurrected Lord drives out the fear of eternal damnation. Either way, *The Resurrected Lord Drives Out Fear!* Now that is something to celebrate! That gives us something to sing about! ***We Sing Our Alleluias to the Resurrected Lord!*** Amen!