

EASTER CELEBRATION
“FACE TO FACE WITH THE RISEN LORD”
Revelation 1:12-19

Pastor David O. Dykes, Green Acres Church, Tyler, Texas, April 4, 2021

INTRODUCTION: Our text for our Easter Celebration is in the book of Revelation. I have a confession to make of a mistake that I’ve made. I don’t mind tell stories on myself – especially when they’re funny. Many of you know that I wrote a book on Revelation called *God’s Final Word*. It has been one of my best-selling books because it’s like Revelation for dummies. As through the years, I have hosted book signings in front of what used to be our bookstore. Whenever I sign a book to someone I always add a scripture reference that is a word of encouragement or blessing. So for years when I signed the Revelation book I would add Rev. 21:4. It’s a very positive verse that says, **“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away.”**

But when you’re signing book after book it can get a little confusing, and once as I was signing a bunch of Revelation books my brain went dead for a moment and I couldn’t remember the right scripture to add. I knew it was Revelation 21 but I couldn’t remember the verse. I seemed to remember it was a multiple of 4. So on many books I accidentally wrote the wrong scripture. Instead of Rev 21:4 I wrote Rev 21:8. Big mistake. When I later realized my mistake, I wondered what people must have thought if they looked up that verse. Because it wasn’t a nice, feel-good encouraging verse. Revelation 21:8 says, **“But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars—their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”** I can only imagine some sweet lady opening her book and looking up that scripture and thinking, “Why did the pastor write that reference in my book?” Now if I wrote that reference in your Revelation book, don’t take it personally. It was a

mistake. If your Revelation book has Revelation 21:8 written in it, you can bring it to my office and I will replace it with a new copy with the correct scripture reference with my signature.

Thankfully God doesn't make mistakes. Cindy asked me this week why I was preaching an Easter Message from Revelation. The reason is that since we've just finished John's Gospel account, and now we're studying John's Epistles, I wanted us to study an encounter that John had with the risen Lord when he was an old man.

Tradition tells us that all the other original disciples had died martyr's deaths. Tertullian writes that John was placed in a cauldron of boiling oil by the order of the Emperor Domitian. But John survived this execution attempt. He was exiled to a small island in the Mediterranean called Patmos.

While John was there, God gave him a vision he recorded in the last book of the Bible. It's not the Book of Revelations. Its correct title is The Revelation of Jesus Christ. And in the first chapter, we read that John was praying on the Lord's Day when he hears a loud voice behind him. John turned around and saw Jesus, but he didn't recognize Him. This wasn't the earthly Jesus with the long hair, robe, and sandals. This was the glorified Christ. So how do you think John reacted? Let's read about it in Revelation 1:12-19: **Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me. When I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was one like the Son of Man, dressed in a robe and with a golden sash wrapped around his chest. The hair of his head was white as wool—white as snow—and his eyes like a fiery flame. His feet were like fine bronze as it is fired in a furnace, and his voice like the sound of cascading waters. He had seven stars in his right hand; a sharp double-edged sword came from his mouth, and his face was shining like the sun at full strength.**

When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. He laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid. I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades. Therefore write what you have seen, what is, and what will take place after this.

There are two recorded appearances of the Living Lord after He ascended back into Heaven. In Acts 9 Jesus appeared to Saul on his way to persecute Christians. His appearance was so shocking it knocked Saul to the ground, and he was blinded by the brilliant light – just as John described Jesus in Revelation 1. Saul said, “Who are you?” Jesus said, “I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting. Get up go into the city and I’ll give you further instructions.”

The second appearance of Jesus was to John on the island of Patmos. John fell down too. Jesus made three reassuring statements to John – and those same three statements can give us hope today.

1. BECAUSE JESUS IS ALIVE: I don’t have to be afraid!

He laid his right hand on me and said, “Don’t be afraid.” (Rev.1 :17)

By the time this happened, John was an old man – it was some sixty years after the resurrection, so John was probably in his 80’s. He was isolated and alone exiled to the Island of Patmos. I’ve sailed past the island of Patmos. It isn’t like Gilligan’s island with palm trees and lush greenery. It is a tiny windswept rock 23 miles southwest of Ephesus in the Aegean sea.

If you know the Lord, you will come face to face with the Risen Lord like John did that day. Have you ever imagined what it will be like when you meet Jesus? In fact, that’s the theme of a famous song by Mercy Me entitled, “I can only imagine.” Part of the song says, **“I can only imagine what my eyes will see; when your face is before me.**

Surrounded by your glory, what will my heart feel? Will I dance for your Jesus, or in awe of you be still?” Well, we don’t have to imagine. John lets us know that we won’t be dancing. We’ll be in such awe that we’ll probably fall to our faces like John did.

Some people think when they see Jesus they will prance up and give Him a high-five. “What’s up, Lord? It’s good to be here!” Or maybe you imagine running into the arms of Jesus and giving Him a great bear hug. Or maybe you picture that old shampoo commercial where two lovers are running in slow motion toward each other in a field full of flowers. As she runs, her perfect hair bounces and shines. With music increasing they finally reach each other and hug and spin around among the flowers. Nope. It’s not going to be like any of that. This is the same John

who had reclined next to Jesus at the Last Supper. He was called the disciples that Jesus loved. But when John came face to face with Jesus, the Bible says he was so overwhelmed that he passed out like a dead man. But I love what Jesus did when John passed out. Jesus reached out His hand and said, “Hey John, it’s me. Don’t be afraid.”

We are just recovering for the strangest year of our lives. It was the first pandemic Americans have faced in exactly 100 years. All the churches were closed. There were no sports. The schoolchildren had a spring break that lasted for months. There was racial strife flaring up in cities across America. People were afraid. They were hoarding toilet paper and cleaning products. For many people it wasn’t a pandemic – it was a panic every minute. There were health fears, racial fears, economic fears, occupational fears, and mental and emotional fears. Fear swept through our culture like a wildfire. And through it all our God was calmly telling us, “Don’t be afraid. Trust me.”

God’s people have suffered far more in the past than we have this last year, and God has always carried His people through. In Isaiah 41:13 God says, **“For I am the Lord your God, who holds your right hand, who says to you, “Do not fear, I will help you.”**

FDR was right when he said we have nothing to fear but fear itself. Because crippling fear can do more damage than the thing that you’re afraid of.

Paul Harvey was a funny guy. He had a syndicated radio show that lasted for over thirty years. He used to tell the story of a chicken farmer in Tennessee who suspected that a fox was raiding his hen house at night. He was losing eggs and hens. So one night he put his loaded shotgun by his bed and stayed awake. He heard a ruckus from the henhouse so he slipped out into the night wearing nothing but his nightshirt. As he approached the dark hen house fear set in. He began to wonder, “What if that fox attacks me? What if it’s not a fox, but a bobcat or a cougar?” As he stood at the doorway to the henhouse, these thoughts of fear swirled through his mind. It was at that precise moment that his old faithful hound dog, Blue, crept up behind him and cold-nosed him under his nightshirt. Kablam! Nine hens lost their lives that

night. But Paul Harvey used to say that it wasn't the shotgun that killed those chickens, it was fear. Jesus says to you today, "Don't be afraid."

2. BECAUSE JESUS IS ALIVE: I can live forever! Jesus then said to John, **"I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever."** (Rev. 1:18)

Most people think there is an afterlife, but they have the wrong idea about how to go to heaven. If you ask the average person on the street how to go to heaven, they're answer is probably going to be something like, "Be good, or do good." They think that if you do more good things than bad things that God will let you into heaven. But the problem with that is that God requires absolute perfection. He says, "The soul that sins, it shall surely die." If you have lived a perfect life, then you might have a chance of earning heaven. Anybody here qualify?

There are some things in life that you have to do perfectly. Take email addresses. If you miss one letter or character, it won't go to the correct recipient. You must enter the address perfectly or it won't work.

It reminds me of a funny story I read about a businessman flew from Chicago to sunny Miami. His wife was scheduled to fly down to meet him the next day. As he was checking in the hotel he used the lobby computer to send an email to his wife to let her know he had arrived. He didn't have his email contacts, so he tried to remember his wife's email address, but he got one of the letters wrong. Instead of sending it to his wife, he accidentally sent it to a pastor's wife in Kentucky, whose husband had died a few weeks before. When she read the email she fainted. The email said, **"Dear Wife, Just got checked in. Everything is prepared for your arrival tomorrow. Your loving husband. P.S. It sure is hot down here!"**

The characters in an email address or URL address have to be perfect or you don't connect with the right person or website. But thankfully, we don't have to live a perfect life to go to Heaven. You just have to put your faith in the only perfect man who ever lived. There was only one man who ever walked on this planet who was perfect. His name was Jesus.

He was perfect in His birth, born of a virgin. He was perfect in His life. The Bible says He was tempted every way we are tempted, yet He never sinned. Can you imagine that? He was perfect in death. Even though He

was innocent of any crime, He died the worst kind of death imaginable, the death of being nailed to a cross.

And Jesus was perfect in conquering the grave. He's the only person in history to enter a tomb cold stone dead and then walk out alive forever. And because He is alive forever, we can live with Him forever.

In John 14:19-20 **Jesus said, "In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you.** Jesus is the only man to conquer death.

This world is littered with the graves of millions of people. You can travel to Medina and see the tomb of Mohammed. You can go to Sri Lanka and visit the Temple of the Tooth, where a tooth from the corpse of Buddha is enshrined. The pyramids in Egypt and the Taj Mahal in India are all just fancy tombs.

31 miles northeast of Beijing you can find 13 tombs of the Emperors of the Ming dynasty. I stood in awe as I looked at them – each one covering 100 acres each. But they were filled with corpses. But I've also stood in a garden in Jerusalem 100 yards from the place of the skull, and have seen with my own eyes that the tomb is empty. I heard one brother shout as he walked out of that tomb, "I got GOOD NEWS. He ain't in dere!"

3. BECAUSE JESUS IS ALIVE: I know He's in control!

"I hold the keys of death and Hades." (Rev. 1:18) I heard the funny story of a student pilot and an instructor who were coming in to make a landing in a small single-engine airplane. It was a bad landing, it bounced on the runway a couple of times before it finally started rolling straight. The instructor said to the student pilot. "That was the worst landing you've ever made!" The student said, "Me? I thought YOU were landing the airplane!"

It's important for pilots to understand who's in control of the aircraft at all times. In fact, in all airlines the pilots are trained in CRM (crew resource management). If the first officer is flying the plane and the captain says, "I've got control" the first officer must verbally

acknowledge, “You’ve got control.” And he removes his hand from the flight controls.

In the same way, we need to understand who is in control of our lives and the entire universe. You and I want to say, “I’ve got control.” But God says, “No, I’ve got control.” And we need to acknowledge, “Okay, Father, You’ve got control.” And we need to let go and let God.

God has a purpose and a plan and that plan will never fail. The Bible says in Isaiah 14: **The Lord of Armies has sworn: “As I have purposed, so it will be; as I have planned it, so it will happen... This is the plan prepared for the whole earth, and this is the hand stretched out against all the nations. The Lord of Armies himself has planned it; therefore, who can stand in its way? It is his hand that is outstretched, so who can turn it back?”** (Isaiah 14:24, 26-27)

Over the past twelve months so many experts have told us that the situation is OUT OF CONTROL. The side effects of Covid have taken their toll. Stress, anxiety, fear and suicide rates are all up because so many people have been pushing the panic button over and over again. On the day that we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, I have one main observation to make. And it’s a truth I learned as a child. Are you ready? I want you to write it down. It’s only eight words. Put in your smart phone. Tweet it, Instagram it, Tik Tok it, Snapchat it, Whatsapp it, WeChat it, and shout it from your roof. Here it is. Ready? **HE’S GOT THE WHOLE WORLD IN HIS HANDS.**

That’s an old song, but it’s also true from the Bible. In Isaiah 40:12 the Bible says that God has marked off the Universe with the span of His hand, which means planet earth is in there. He’s got the little bitty baby in His hands. He’s got you and me brother in His hands. He’s got you and me sister in His hands. He’s got the whole world in His hands. Turn to someone beside you and say, **“He’s got the whole world in His hands.”**

That’s what He meant when He told John, “Don’t worry. I’ve got the keys.” The keys to what? The keys to everything – to life, death, Heaven, Hell, the key to peace, joy, and salvation. When you own something you get the keys. When you sign that contract on a house,

they say, “Here are the keys.” When you sign on the dotted line to buy a car, the salesman says, “Here are the keys.” And when Jesus signed on the dotted line to pay for our salvation. God said, “Here, my Son, you have the keys to humanity.” You’re in control.

CONCLUSION: On this Sunday morning, we celebrate because the tomb in Jerusalem is empty, and because our hearts are full with His living presence. True story. When Nikita Khrushchev, the leader of the Communist Party, died in 1971, the Russians didn’t know what to do with his body. He had fallen out of favor with the Communist Leaders, so they didn’t want to bury him in Russia. They asked President Nixon if Nikita Khrushchev could be buried on American soil. He said, “Absolutely not!” They asked several other countries and no country wanted to let Nikita Khrushchev be buried on their soil.

Then they contacted **Golda Meier**, the Prime Minister of Israel, and she had a tremendous sense of humor. She said to the Russian official, **“Sure, we’ll be glad for you to bury Nikita Khrushchev in Israel, but I must warn you, our nation has the highest resurrection rate of any nation on earth.”** The Russians decided, “No, thanks. We won’t take a chance.”

So the Easter message God wants you to hear today is simple. Jesus says three things to you. “Because I am alive, Don’t be afraid. Because I live forever, you can live forever. And because I have the keys, remember that I’m in control.”

Jesus is alive, and He is living in me. And Jesus is living in the hearts and lives of those who know and love Him. Jesus would love to come into your life and take control. If you aren’t absolutely certain that you are going to Heaven when you die, let me lead you in a prayer of faith too put your trust in Jesus.

God, I’m a sinner and I’m sorry. Please forgive me. I want to have Your peace. I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son and I want to trust Him as my Savior. I’m willing to follow Him as my Lord from this moment forward and forever. In Jesus name, AMEN