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Grace WELS Durand MI
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Revelation 1:4b-8,17b&18¹
Jesus, the Alpha & Omega & the Firstborn
from the dead, is coming in Glory w the
clouds.

Last Sunday of Reformation &
Endtime – The Sunday of Christ The King
Supplementary Lectionary
Series “B,” Epistles, adapted

⁴ ... Grace to you and peace from the One who is, and the One who was, and the One who is coming, and from the Seven Spirits [or, The Sevenfold-Spirit] who are before his Throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.

To the One who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us a Kingdom and Priests to his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen!

⁷ Behold! He is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and all the peoples of the earth
will mourn because of him.
Yes! Amen!

⁸ “I Myself Am The Alpha and The Omega,” says the LORD God, “who is, and who was, and who is coming – The Almighty.”

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¹⁷ “Fear not! I Myself Am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and Behold! I Am alive for ever and ever! And I have the Keys of Death and Hell!

JESUS CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN
I. HE IS LORD GOD ALMIGHTY
II. HE IS THE REDEEMER
III. HE GIVES GRACE & PEACE

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

In the Name of Christ Jesus the King, who is coming again to judge the living and the dead,
Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

Today is the Last Sunday of Reformation and Endtime, the Sunday of Christ the King. It is the Last Sunday of the Church Year. Next Sunday we begin a new Church Year with the First Sunday in Advent. Our text for our celebration of this Last Sunday of the Church Year is from the first prophecy of the Book of Revelation; this text includes both the promise and warning that Jesus is coming again. The Book of Revelation begins with this prophecy of Jesus' Second Coming and ends with the same prophecy. Thus, our text reminds us that Jesus Christ the King is coming again to judge the living and the dead. JESUS CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN I. HE IS LORD GOD ALMIGHTY; II. HE IS THE REDEEMER; III. HE GIVES GRACE & PEACE

JESUS CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN
I. HE IS LORD GOD ALMIGHTY

From the context of these verses, we know that Jesus is the one who is speaking these words: "I Myself Am The Alpha and The Omega," says the LORD God, 'who is, and who was, and who is coming, the Almighty.... Fear not! I Myself Am the First and the Last!" (1:8&17b). Jesus is claiming for himself titles of God that were revealed in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, God said:

"I Am The LORD God of Sabaoth" [t/ab;x]
μυηιλ&aôAhw:hyò hy<h]a,; eijmi
kuvrio" oJ qeov" ... oJ pantokravtwr]."

Jesus, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is the LORD God of Sabaoth – Sabaoth can be translated as armies, hosts, almighty. Jesus is Almighty. Moreover, Jesus is eternal.

Of himself, Jesus says, "I Am, I Was, I Am Coming." What Jesus says about himself is true also of the Father and the Holy Spirit. The writer to the Hebrews states this truth about Jesus when he says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). We sing this praise of Jesus and the Holy Trinity in the words of the *Gloria Patri*: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be"² Those words, "as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be," state the same thing as our text: Jesus, with the Father and the Holy Ghost is

² *Christian Worship – A Lutheran Hymnal* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993), 273.

the One “who is, and who was, and who is coming...” One of the aspects of Jesus’ almighty power is revealed in our text.

Jesus says in our text, “I have the Keys of Death and Hell” (1:18b). Jesus holds death under his power and dominion. Jesus states, “I am the Living One; I was dead, and Behold! I Am alive for ever and ever!” (1:18a). And so, John, who records these Words, refers to “Jesus Christ, who is the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth” (1:5).

Jesus is “the Faithful Witness.” During his time on earth and especially during his three-year public ministry, Jesus’ preaching and teaching were faithful – truthful. Jesus has left his Faithful Witness to us in his Word in truth and purity.

Jesus is also “the Firstborn from the dead.” The Scriptures give ample testimony of Jesus’ death. Jesus was crucified – nailed to a cross; Jesus died; Jesus was buried. On the Third Day, Easter Sunday morning, Jesus arose from the dead. Once again, the Scriptures give ample and overwhelming testimony to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. Jesus has destroyed death.

Jesus has destroyed death (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54b-57); Jesus is victorious over the devil (cf. Hebrews 2:14); Jesus has conquered hell (cf. 1 Peter 3:18-20; Colossians 2:15). Only the LORD God Almighty could do this. Jesus is LORD God Almighty. Jesus holds death and the devil in obedience to him. Jesus holds absolute power over the entire universe, and makes all things serve his purpose.

APPROPRIATION

Jesus is LORD God Almighty [τ/αβ;χ] μὴ ἰσχυρὸς ὢν ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ; kuvrio" oJ geov" ... oJ pantokravtwr]. Since this is the case, it follows that Jesus is not only Almighty – Omnipotent – but also Omniscient (knows all things), Omnipresent (present everywhere at the same time), Eternal (everlasting), Wise. Such attributes will at first make us squirm in discomfort, because we know our sinful condition. But then, we also hear that Jesus is LORD [hw:hy]; Jesus is the God of free and faithful grace.

Jesus could use his Almighty Power, his Omnipotence, against us, for Jesus is all-knowing – Omniscient; Jesus knows our sinfulness – our sinful condition. Jesus knows our sins of omission and commission. Jesus knows the sins we commit; Jesus knows the things that we should do but that we do not do. In his perfection and holiness, Jesus ought to punish us and separate himself from us forever. But Jesus is LORD.

Jesus Christ is LORD. In his love for us sinners, Jesus does not use his almighty power against us but for us. This love is seen especially in Jesus’ redeeming work for us.

JESUS CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN
II. HE IS THE REDEEMER

John includes, in the opening Words of this Book of Revelation, this hymn of praise:

^{5b} To the One who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us a Kingdom and Priests to his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen! (5b&6).

John indicates just how great Jesus' love is for believers as well as for the world. Jesus told his disciples, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). And, regarding Jesus' love for the entire world, Jesus himself states,

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his One and Only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the Name of God's One and Only Son (John 3:16-18).

The same love that the Father has for sending his Son to be the Sacrifice of Atonement for the sins of the world (cf. 1 John 2:2), is the love the Son has for giving his life as that sacrifice on the cross. Believers in Jesus join with St. Paul in confessing, "The Son of God ... loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20b). Yes! "Jesus loves me, he who died, heaven's gates to open wide. He has washed away my sin, let this little child come in. Yes! Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so!"

Jesus "has freed us from our sins by his blood." Sin was the chain that bound mankind to death – temporal, earthly death and eternal death and damnation in hell. Jesus freed us from this; Jesus did this by his blood.

Old Testament worship included the slaughter of sacrificial animals. Barrels and barrels of blood were poured out over the centuries. Yet, the writer to the Hebrews correctly states, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). But "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22b). Jesus is the perfect blood sacrifice for sins. The Apostle Peter tells us why this is the case.

Peter writes in his First Epistle, "You know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed ... but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect" (cf. 1 Peter 1:18&19). Jesus' blood, the redemption price for the sins of the world – Jesus' blood is so precious, so valuable, so costly, because it is the blood of God's One and Only Son. That blood of Jesus pays for the sins of all people for all time. Moreover, that this ransom price of Jesus' blood is enough to pay for all people, is testified to by Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

That is why John refers to Jesus as “the Firstborn from the dead” (1:5b); that is also why Jesus refers to himself in these words, “I Myself Am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and Behold! I Am alive for ever and ever!” (1:17b&18a). It is this risen eternal and Almighty Jesus Christ, who is coming again.

John refers to Jesus as “the One who is, and the One who was, and the One who is coming” (1:4c). Regarding himself Jesus, “I Myself Am The Alpha and The Omega,’ says the LORD God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is coming, the Almighty’” (1:8). Jesus is coming again. John gives one view of Jesus’ coming in these words:

***Behold! He is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and all the peoples of the earth
will mourn because of him.
Yes! Amen! (1:7).***

No one will escape Jesus’ Second Coming. The dead will be raised. Those still living will be gathered. All will be placed before the Judgment Seat of Christ. That means also that those who pierced him – hands, feet, side – those who mocked, jeered and ridiculed him; those who flogged him and pounded the crown of thorns into his head – all will see him. “All the peoples of the earth will mourn because of” Jesus. They will mourn, weep, wail and gnash their teeth, because they were people, tribes, nations “of the earth.” They – those who are of the earth – had the opportunity to hear the Gospel and become sons and daughters of heaven, but they rejected and refused. They will mourn because of Jesus.

Jesus is the Alpha and Omega. Jesus is the First and the Last. Jesus is the beginning, middle and end. Jesus redeemed all mankind. Jesus is all that is needed for salvation and eternal life in heaven.

APPLICATION

The Apostle Peter in his Second Epistle gives this description of the Day of the LORD. Peter writes, “But the Day of the LORD will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare” (2 Peter 3:10). Then Peter goes on to say, “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the Day of God and speed its coming” (2 Peter 3:11&12). Or, putting this truth negatively, Jesus describes those who do not enter heaven in these Words at the end of the Book of Revelation: “Outside [outside of heaven] are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood” (22:15). Jesus is describing those steeped and entrapped by sin and impenitence. For them, Jesus’ Second Coming will be a day of mourning and weeping. Let it not be so for you and me!

Indeed, our reaction as we contemplate Jesus' Second Coming may well be one of terror, trembling, and gripping fear. We know our sinfulness. We know the many times we have not done what we should; we know the many times we have failed to do what is good; we know the sinful condition into which we were born. But we look to the cross of Jesus; we look to the one who "was pierced for our transgressions," who "was crushed for our iniquities"; we know the one by whose "wounds we are healed" (cf. Isaiah 53:5). In repentance and faith in Jesus our Savior, Jesus says to us too: "Fear not!" In that repentance and faith in Jesus, we join all believers in lifting up our heads as our redemption draws near in Jesus' Second Coming.

Jesus describes that final deliverance that is awaiting us who believe in him as our Savior. Jesus says,

²⁵ "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:25-28).

Lift up your heads. Lift up your heads with joy and anticipation, because Jesus your Savior is coming to deliver you from death and the grave. Only Jesus can do this because he, our Savior and Redeemer, gives us grace and peace.

JESUS CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN III. HE GIVES GRACE & PEACE

The Apostle John opens our text with the blessing:

⁴ ... Grace to you and peace from the One who is, and the One who was, and the One who is coming, and from the Seven Spirits [or, The Sevenfold-Spirit] who are before his Throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth (1:4b-5a).

Obviously, this grace and peace about which St. John is speaking comes from the Triune God – The Father, The Son, The Holy Spirit. The Seven Churches in Asia Minor to whom Jesus was directly sending this Book of Revelation, needed this blessing of grace and peace.

These were not peaceful times for the church. Rather, Jesus was addressing the Church Militant. There was persecution and pressure coming against the church from outside. The Roman Empire and its Caesars and its people, were against Jesus and his Church. The Jews hated the Christians. Then there was pressure from within the church. False teachers whose doctrines contradicted the pure Word of God, tried to lead God's people

astray. (Read the Seven Letters addressed to the seven churches in Asia Minor, in Revelation Chapters Two through Three.) The believers in Jesus, who held to his Word in truth and purity, needed grace and peace.

John addresses the believers and says, “Grace to you” from this Triune God – Father, Son, Holy Ghost. Grace is God’s undeserved love for those who deserve his wrath and punishment because of sin. Sin is missing the mark or target of perfection that God demands. In the Old Testament, God said, “Be Holy for I, the LORD your God, Am Holy” (Leviticus 19:2b). Jesus spoke this same demand, when he said, “Be perfect ... as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). To sin or being sinful, however, is to miss this target of holiness, perfection and righteousness. It is by grace alone, through faith alone in Jesus, that the forgiveness of sin is given. This grace of God in Jesus brings peace.

John says, “Grace to you and peace” (1:4b). Because of sin, peace is not the natural relationship between God and man. David says in Psalm 5,

**⁴ You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil;
with you the wicked cannot dwell.**

**⁵ The arrogant cannot stand in your presence;
you hate all who do wrong (Psalm 5:4&5).**

God hates those who do wrong. Therefore, God hates all mankind. What God hates, God punishes. But by his grace in Christ Jesus, God gives peace.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the peace that God gives when he says, “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19a). Through Jesus, God was reconciled to the world – God was at peace with the world. This reconciliation and peace came through Jesus. Through Jesus, the sins of the world have been forgiven.

APPROPRIATION

Again the Apostle Paul tells you and me how we have this grace and peace through Jesus. St. Paul writes to the Romans,

^{5:1} Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our LORD Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings ... (Romans 5:1-3a).

To be justified means the same thing as to be declared righteous, to be acquitted of sin, to have sins forgiven. This justification is yours and mine personally, through faith in Christ Jesus. Through faith in Jesus “we have peace with God.” God is at peace with all mankind through Jesus; people, you and me, have the benefit of this peace by faith alone in Jesus. This faith is created and continued in our hearts through the Gospel of Jesus – the Good News of everything Jesus has done to bring reconciliation and peace with God.

Recall that John referred to Jesus Christ as “the faithful witness” (1:5). Jesus has left us his “faithful witness” in his Word in truth and purity – the Bible, the Holy Scriptures. Through his Word, Jesus makes the grace and peace he secured for all – Jesus makes that grace and peace our personal possession. You and I need that grace and peace of Jesus.

As with the case with the early New Testament Church, we believers too are under pressure. We too have tribulations, turmoils, troubles and temptations. At the present, we do not have the physical persecution that assaulted the early New Testament Church. We do, however, face ridicule from those outside the faith; and, we face the constant bombardment of those people and situations that would drag us away from God’s Word in truth and purity. As Jesus will say later on to the church in Philadelphia – one of the seven churches in Asia Minor – “Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown” (3:11). Hold to the Word of God in truth and purity, that you may continue in the grace and peace of our LORD Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

This is the Sunday of Christ the King – the Last Sunday of the Season of Reformation and Endtime. Jesus is coming again. On that Last Day, he will take to himself all who have been brought to faith in him as their Savior. Through the Gospel of Jesus, may we be counted among them. Amen.