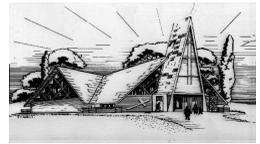




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon- Sunday Quasimodo Geniti

That you may believe and have Life in
His Name!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Rev 1, 4-18:

- 4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is *coming* (~~to come~~), and from the seven spirits who are before His throne,
- 5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood
- 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- 7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.
- 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is *coming* the Almighty."
- 9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.
- 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet
- 11 saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."
- 12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,
- 13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around His chest.
- 14 His head and His hair were white like wool, as *brilliant* as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire,
- 15 His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the roar of many waters.
- 16 In His right hand He held seven stars, from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and His face was like the sun shining in full strength.
- 17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last,
- 18 and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

• Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, and our hearts and fill us with the good news of Jesus' resurrection so that we will have faith and Life in Christ. Amen.*

• **Dear Beloved in Christ!**

- Today we hear another witness of Jesus' resurrection. John, the Gospel-writer who was the best friend of Jesus during His earthly ministry. He was the youngest of the disciples but lived the longest. Many sceptics of our day and age particularly reject John's writings and witness, because he confesses explicitly that Jesus clearly taught that He was indeed the true Son of God. There are many voices that claim that Jesus never said of Himself that He is the Son of God. They can only attempt to do so if they exclude John's Gospel and writings straight away. However, we have hardware evidence that John's Gospel was read and understood in harmony with the Synoptic Gospels, because all four Gospels were found written together on one sheep skin!
- And we have to remember that the disciple who lived the longest was John. So, there we have a person who was an ear and eye-witness of Christ's ministry who could ensure that heresies and false writings could be refuted, right to the end of the first century! You could simply go to him and ask him. He was residing in Ephesus most of the time.
- So, to try and remove John's Gospel and his letters from the biblical canon is just very a-historical. There you have a Gospel which completely fulfils all requirements for true authenticity. He was a direct eye- and ear-witness of the ministry of Christ! Besides, what he wrote in his Gospel and letters can also be shown in the other writings. John's Gospel does not stand against the synoptic Gospels or Paul's writings. It is possible to verify this.
- In Romans 1-3 Paul gives us the hermeneutic key of all God's writings, how they want to be understood. First of all God reveals His Gospel as good news. That is, God makes His Gospel available and clear in His Word as the power that saves us. This is certain! On the other hand God also reveals His Wrath in His Word via His Law. The function of revealing His Law is to reveal that all people are sinners, those under the Law and those outside the Law, both Jews and Gentiles. Nobody escapes the Wrath of God unless he or she is saved by the Gospel! This is certain too! It too is revealed by God!
- Then Paul carries on to lay out the right relationship and distinction of God's Law and Gospel. The whole intention of God's Word is clarity, revelation, not diffusion or darkness! The Word of God is clear within the boundaries of God's intention, namely Revelation of Law and Gospel!
- In John's Gospel in chapter 1,17 we find the following: *"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."* You see, we have the same theme, Law and Gospel. Law and Gospel are clarified in their right distinction between the differing ministries of Moses and Christ Jesus!

- We find exactly the same key being applied in the book of Revelation, which was written to reveal what Jesus is doing after His Ascension!
- So, it is God speaking to us today through His witness. Whilst John was on a mission trip, maybe even captured on the island Patmos because of mission work, he received this revelation during the day. He wasn't asleep. He was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. That is, he was in Service, his thoughts were in the Spirit. The revelation of Christ was not only something for the eyes but very much so for the ears and for the mind.
- It started off by John hearing a loud voice like a trumpet behind him. The voice was telling him the following: *"Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."*
- This revelation had to be written down and to be sent out to seven existing congregations in Asia Minor!
- Now what did John see? He saw the glorified Christ in the midst of His congregations! The lamp-stands are a picture of the congregations and Christ is the Son of Man he saw who looked like God the Father Himself. His head and His hair were white and brilliant as snow which reveals Christ's pureness. No sin, completely blameless, and brilliant as snow- His pureness radiates, just like His eyes are radiating light like a fire. So, Christ is alive and well in the midst of His congregations! He sees everything! Interestingly, Christ is not in the midst of a crowd, but in the midst of His battling *congregations* on earth!
- So, we see, Christ is not gone, or far away removed from His congregations! No. He is present as **Son of Man.** that is: including His human nature and body, in our midst, as we gather as His congregation. When John saw Jesus he dropped to the ground, to the feet of Jesus, as though dead! This is what happens if a fallible man, although a disciple of Christ, meets the Son of Man directly! It is appropriate that we start our Divine Services on our knees, that is, repenting of our sins as we meet this Jesus here in Service! If He would appear before our eyes today in our midst we would all be on the ground! Why is that? When a sinful human being meets His holy Creator every human being instantly realises, I am a sinner, I am unholy, I am dead in sin!
- Now why is God not using His direct almightiness to put all people in a state of repentance, one might ask? Answer: Then God would go against His revelation by His Word. Jesus said to Thomas, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. That is why John had to write down what he saw that day.

• As John fell down before Jesus, Jesus did and said the following: *"But He laid His right hand on me, saying, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forever more, and I have the keys of Death and Hades'."*

• Fear not!- the Gospel in a nutshell! Jesus does not give him this revelation to destroy him and the congregations. Jesus confirms that He is alive and will never die again and He has the keys of Death and Hades! Jesus is in control of Death! He conquered death and therefore He is Lord over Life and Death! Our existence depends on Him alone!

• This is comforting for those who are in Christ because of what John stated in the beginning: Grace and peace from Him who is, who was and who is coming and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness...! He is the One who loves us, who has loosened or untied us from our sins through His blood! He has made us into a kingdom, priests to His God and Father! He has made us to be the priesthood of all believers in one kingdom. Part of this kingdom are the congregations on earth with Jesus, our living Saviour and King, present in our midst! This kingdom reaching onto earth does not exclude us from tribulation and having to learn patient endurance. We participate both of afflictions and tribulations and in the kingdom. These things are not excluding each other but are inclusive until Christ's second coming. We participate in the priesthood of all believers just as we participate in the afflictions and persecutions of the battling church here on earth.

• But amidst all these tribulations and afflictions and chaos in the world in general, Jesus remains the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, Beginning and End. Through Him everything was created and He will bring everything to its decreed end. He is Lord of lords. He has all authority in heaven and on earth! He is actively involved in what happens on earth. He holds first creation and the new Creation together until the day when the first creation will pass away completely. That is why as His baptised servants, absolved from our sins, we need not to live in fear! Our resurrected Lord lives and speaks Life upon us in His congregation, and He also clearly reprimands us when and where we are in danger of falling under the wrath of God again.

• All of this Jesus does to us and for us so that we will remain priests in His kingdom forever. *"To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."*

• *"The Grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all."* **Amen.** *[John 22,21]*