

April 3, 2016  
Revelation 1:4-18

Easter 2C  
The Reassuring Presence of the Risen Christ

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Risen and Victorious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

There are many people who have the fear of being alone at home...especially children. Remember *Home Alone* movies from over 20 years ago. Maybe those have given more reasons to fear being home alone. What helps quiet such fears is the presence of a parent, family member, or familiar babysitter, or even a trusted pet. The presence of a loved one brings children feelings of security that quiet their natural fears while most of us have overcome our fears of being alone at home, we often have bigger fears related to physical death and divine judgment. Our text for this morning, this Sunday after Easter, makes vivid that THE PRESENCE OF THE RISEN CHRIST WITH HIS CHURCH CALMS OUR DOUBTS AND FEARS.

What doubts and what fears?

First, we may doubt that Jesus is indeed the only true God? What does society tell us? We've been hearing that all roads lead to heaven? There are many, even in the "Christian" churches that will say that Allah and God the Father are the same. There are those that will say that the god of the Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses is the same as our Triune God. You've probably all seen the Coexist bumper sticker with different symbols from the major world religions. This is what the world is telling us, we can coexist with all these faiths...since really they are all the same. But are they? This can truly cause us to doubt.

Or perhaps we have followed the Lord Jesus Christ for all of our lives. But then Satan sends things into our lives to cause us to doubt or even lack faith. We heard the story of Thomas in our Gospel lesson. He needed physical proof that Jesus was alive or he would never believe. Many people need physical proof that Jesus is the true God today as well. Thomas had been through a miserable experience...his friend, master, and teacher was brutally killed and crucified and laid in a tomb. He knew once a person died...they don't come back to life (even though He was around the raising of Lazarus, the child of Nain, and Jairus' daughter).

What has Satan caused you to doubt that Jesus is the true God? Maybe it's what you perceive as unanswered prayers? Maybe you are buying into what the world is telling you. Maybe your life is out of control.

Secondly you may be afraid. Our text shows us that John was afraid. It's a fear that he shares with all of us, a fear of being in God's presence, physical death, and judgment. It's a common occurrence, even in the Old Testament people are afraid to be in the presence of God. Isaiah and Moses are prominent. Many people are even afraid of

physical death, afraid of the process, afraid of leaving behind loved ones. Perhaps in your minds you might be afraid of what happens after your physical death. Our text shares with us that *“from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword”*<sup>1</sup> this sharp two-edged sword is an image of God’s Word in full force coming forth. It’s His Law and Gospel. Perhaps there’s a sin in your life that has been bothering you for quite some time. Perhaps you are afraid of what Christ will say to you when you stand in judgement before Him.

Finally, we can have doubts about the reality of the resurrection and the ongoing presence of God. Perhaps we ask the questions: Is God with His Church? Is God with the church I belong? Is God with our Pastor and Shepherd? Perhaps these questions happen because you’ve seen your church shrink in size or the direction of the church isn’t what you envisioned.

You have your doubts and your fears. I have my own doubts and fears that I personally struggle with on a daily basis. St. John in the beginning chapter of Revelation has a message that can calm us and bring us certainty, the Jesus is indeed the Risen Christ, the Son of the Living God.

This opening vision of the Risen Christ reassures us that Christ is the only true God from eternity. He is the one that is consistently portrayed in the Old Testament. Even the vivid images that John uses to describe what He saw are consistent with the images of the eternal God in the Old Testament.

Throughout the Old Testament there are images of the Christ figure that John describes. I saw *“one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. <sup>14</sup> The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, <sup>15</sup> his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters...from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. <sup>2</sup>”* Prophets such as Ezekiel, Daniel and Isaiah use images of these in describing the Lord Almighty in the Old Testament.

When we worship Jesus, we are worshipping the one and only eternal God who is one of the persons in the Triune God. This shows that Jesus is only way to heaven.

In the text we aren’t just shown that Jesus is the eternal God. We are also comforted and calmed of our fears. Christ calms our fears and assures of the victory over death.

We need not fear His presence. Our text tells us that John fell at Christ’s feet as though dead. John was afraid, for He was in the presence of the almighty God, the Holy God. But Christ removes the need to fear God by freeing us from our sins by His blood.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Re 1:16). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Re 1:13–16). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Jesus Christ frees us from the fear of being in the presence of God. Yes, it's true that in the Old Testament that if you saw the face of God, you would die. Now, God doesn't reveal himself in that way today, but yet we don't have to fear His presence, because Christ's blood has removed our sin...it has cleansed us and made us as white as snow.

We need not fear death. St. John writes: "*Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead*"<sup>3</sup>. Jesus Christ has died and is alive forevermore. He has defeated death. He lives and reigns to all eternity. Because He died and defeated death, you too will defeat death when He come again in glory and raises you out of death and the grave. He can do this for as John records Christ's Words: *I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.*<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ is alive forevermore. He lives for you so that you can live too.

I have been preparing my catechism lessons on the third article of the creed, where we confess that "I believe in the Resurrection of the Body and Life Everlasting." Indeed, we do. In doing so, I emphasize that Life Everlasting is a present reality. We possess it even now, even though we won't fully experience it until Christ returns and reunites souls and bodies to live for eternity in His New Creation. We need not fear death. It's not normal or natural, but we as Christian's don't have to fear it. You and I were not created die, we were created to live. You and I will live without sin in full body and soul when our Lord returns and unlocks death forever.

We also need not fear judgment. St. John writes. *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood*<sup>6</sup> *and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*<sup>7</sup> *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.*<sup>5</sup> For God the Father sees us in Christ. Christ Jesus has made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father. C.F.W. Walther put it in these words in the great work "Law and Gospel": "Christ has died for you despite your sins. You do not need to fear or yield to despair. You belong to the redeemed of the Lord, and your destination is heaven. Be of good cheer!"

You belong to the Lord; your destination is heaven. You need not fear judgment. It is not yours, the Lord already bore your judgment. Your sins are forgiven.

Christ Jesus not only calms our doubts and assures that He is the One True God. He not only calms our fears and assures of the victory over death, He also assures us that He is with His church.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Re 1:5). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Re 1:18). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Re 1:5–7). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

Christ walks in the midst of lampstands and holds the stars in His right hand. In essence John is writing that Christ is present in the midst of His churches and holds His pastors in His hands. In other words, Christ is present in and among His Church.

He is present in several ways in His Church. Christ is present as He speaks through His Word. You and I, we hear His Word every Sunday, whether it's the Word read or the Word preached. Christ Jesus is present.

Christ Jesus is present in the Words of Absolution as your sins are forgiven.

Christ Jesus is present in His very supper as He feeds you, His Bride, the Church with His very body and blood. Here in the Lord's Supper, Christ forgives you. Here He comes to you to feed your body and soul with the medicine of immortality.

In this vision that John has, Christ is indeed present. He has not ascended to heaven and abandoned His church. Neither has He abandoned His pastors who serve His people.

As we think about the Church, and our fears of God not being there. Remember it's Christ's Church, not our church, not my church, but Christ's. Where Christ is taught in truth and purity and where His Sacraments are administered, He is there holding up the Church and caring for His church. He alone is the one that causes the church to grow, through us and our many vocations in life.

Christ will never abandon His Bride, the Church. The judgment that you deserve Christ took for you. The death you deserve, Christ died for you and you will live. The fear that you have in the presence of God is removed by the precious blood of Christ. The doubts that you and I have can be overcome by the resurrected Lord and Savior who has the keys to Death and Hades because He has overcome death and has shown you that He is the eternal Son of God, who is God in flesh, crucified and Risen from the dead.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen!

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, our Resurrected King. Amen.*