

Easter 2
April 3, 2016

"Security in the Nail-Scarred Hands"

REVELATION 1:4-8

John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits 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 him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father-- to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen. ⁷ Look, 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. So shall it be! Amen. ⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Security is extremely important to us. That is why we lock the doors of our homes and cars. You may even have an alarm system for your home or a dog for added security. Sure it is a hassle to check in at the airport and go through security but it is worth the effort because of the security it provides. We have a Department of Homeland Security to protect our country from terrorist attacks. We put money from each pay check into Social Security so there will be extra money there for us when we retire.

On this Sunday after Easter we want to think about the security we have in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus. On the night of his resurrection our Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples and said to them, "Peace be to you!" He then showed them the nail marks in his hands to remind them of what he had done to save them from the consequences of their sins. Jesus offers us a peace and security that this world cannot give.

In the words that we just read from the Revelation to St John we heard that Jesus will someday come again on clouds of glory. How do you know that you will be safe and secure when he returns? Your security is not found in how good you have been or how hard you have tried to please God. Your security is found in what Jesus has done to save you. Let's think of the security we have in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus as we take a closer look at these words from the Revelation. We want to see that in Jesus we have security from the past, security for the present and security for the future.

Security from the past

It sure is good to know that things I have done wrong in the past will not be held against me when Jesus returns to judge all people. It is possible to have everything you have ever done wrong expunged from your record because of who Jesus is and what he has done for you.

Who is Jesus Christ? Jesus is Lord and God from all eternity. That is why he is able to do the impossible task of removing our sin. John writes, "Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come." Our God is eternal. He told Moses, "I am

that I am." When Jesus talked about himself he said such things as "Before Abraham was I am." He is the great I am, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit who is described by John as the seven spirits before the throne. The Revelation describes Jesus as the Alpha and the Omega. These are the first and last words of the Greek alphabet. It is Jesus' way of telling us he is the beginning and end of everything.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples, Thomas was not there. He refused to believe what the disciples told him, what Jesus had told him, and what the Scriptures had so clearly said of Jesus. Jesus appeared to him personally. Then Thomas said, "My Lord and my God." He believed with all his heart that the person standing in front of him with the nail marks in his hands and the spear wound in his side was his Lord and God.

The Revelation says that Jesus is "the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." If you read the Bible and listen to what Jesus says about his heavenly Father, you become convinced on the basis of what Jesus is saying about his Father he must be the very Son of God. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." He said that if you listen to him you are listening to the Father. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. The first born is the most important. Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father. Jesus is ruler of the kings of the earth. At the name of Jesus every knee must bow. As we sang on Easter morning, "Crown him with many crowns, for he is King of all."

Because of who Jesus is he is able to free you from your sin. Listen to the comforting words from John. "To him who loved us and has freed us from our sins by his blood." To illustrate better what it means to be free, I have brought here today a concrete weight that we use to hold down our tents for Bible Camp. If this were attached to your leg and you were thrown off the pier at Pismo beach it would pull you down. In a few minutes you would drown. Sin pulls us down. We have no way of escaping unless someone rescues us. Jesus is able to free us by his blood because the blood of Jesus that washes us clean is the very blood of God. The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world is our Lord and God. He shows us that by raising himself from the dead.

The sin of your past life is very destructive. It destroys our relationship with God, our relationship with other people and our relationship with ourselves. Hatred, jealousy, pride, selfishness, adultery, talking trash about other people, even thinking trash about other people destroys. It is like a large bomb that explodes inside of a building. When a bomb explodes it blows everything into thousands even millions of broken pieces. There is no way you can reconstruct something destroyed by a bomb. There is no way you can reconstruct a life that has been destroyed by sin.

Romans 3 says about every person who has ever lived on this earth, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." We cannot reconstruct ourselves. We cannot put ourselves together again. We cannot get rid of the past that has destroyed us. Jesus has done it all for us. Because he is who he says he is, our Lord and our God, he is able to free us from the past by his blood and make us pure and holy in God's sight in this life and for all eternity. Because we are secure from the past, we are also secure for the present.

Secure for the present

It sure is good to know that your life now has meaning and purpose to it. Listen again to what John writes in the Revelation about your present purpose in life as a kingdom of priests who serve the Lord your God. "And he has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen." You see dear Christian because your past is forgiven through Jesus, you have meaning and purpose in life. You have the ultimate job security because you serve in the Lord's kingdom as his royal priests. In the Old Testament only a certain group of people were allowed to serve as priests for the Lord. But now that Jesus has risen from the dead, all of us serve in his kingdom as his royal priests. 1 Peter chapter two says, "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

On the night of his resurrection Jesus not only appeared to his beloved disciples and showed them the nail-scarred hands, he asked them to serve him in his kingdom by telling other people what they had seen in those loving hands. Jesus said, "Peace be to you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." He then breathed on them and said, "If you forgive anyone his sins they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." Jesus has chosen us to serve in his kingdom by pointing people to him as their only hope of forgiveness and peace with God. We have the important job of telling people that without Jesus their sin is not forgiven.

On this Sunday after Easter I always enjoy telling the story of Michael, the twelve year old boy in Florida who nearly lost his life to a large alligator. He and his cousins were swimming in a small lake near their house. Suddenly someone shouted, there is an alligator in the lake. Everyone swam to shore as quickly as possible, except for Michael who was snorkeling underwater. When he surfaced, he heard the screams and saw his cousins swimming for the shore. Then he saw the gator coming after him. He swam as fast as he could. His mother was on the shore pleading with him to swim faster. Just as his mother reached out to pull him to shore the large gator clamped on to Michael's foot. A vicious tug of war ensued between a 120 pound mom and a 400 pound alligator.

When the gator opened its mouth to get a better grip, mom gave it all she could and pulled Michael to safety. The gaping wounds on his leg needed stitches, but they healed. Later he would show his friends the large scars where the gator nearly got him. What he was most proud of was the scars on his hands, where his mother's fingernails had dug in to hold onto him and rescue him. We are proud of the scars on the hands of Jesus. We bear about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our lives have meaning and purpose and value. We have the best jobs in the whole world.

Secure for the future

Because of what we see in the hands of Jesus, we know that our future is secure. Some day the whole world will see Jesus coming again in clouds of glory. That will be a terrible day of mourning for some who could care less about what happened to Jesus. It will be a day of unbelievable joy for those who love the nail-scarred hands. "Look 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. So shall it be!" Revelation 6 says that those who do not have Jesus will want the mountains to cover them. "They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and save us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.'"

Dear Christian, when Jesus comes on clouds of glory, you will not be searching quickly for a place to hide. No you will want to lift up your eyes because this is the day you will see Jesus in all his glory. You will even see the nail marks in his hands when you see him face to face. Jesus said, "When that hour comes, lift up your heads for your redemption is drawing near." Today we go home celebrating the security we have in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus. Today we go home knowing the past is forgiven, the present is exciting and the future is guaranteed. Shalom Lechem. Peace to you. Amen.