

Sermon Series: “From Bethlehem to Calvary to Heaven”--- Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—4/4/2004

Title: “Which Jesus do you see?”

Text: Revelation 1: 4-18

Intro: (*Jesus of Nazareth movie clip from Palm Sun. entrance to end of cleansing of temple*)

Theme: Often we don't like mixed metaphors and images of Jesus—seeing him as gentle Shepherd and all-mighty King seems contradictory; however, unless we see Jesus as both at the beginning of this Passion week, we will not comprehend how he could save us from our sins.

Snapshot of the book of Revelation which we read over the next three weeks

- **Written by the beloved and last of Jesus' disciples** — John last, exiled disciple writing to present/future Christians
- **Written in visionary language** – style of writing like surreal art is to painting — the overall theme is focus not images
 1. The goal was not to be a manual for predicting the end but to encourage us to see the big picture and remain strong
 2. *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” Matt. 24: 35-36*
- **Written with a theme repeated seven times in Revelation**—*“God and his Son/our Savior Jesus are all powerful. Although the world and Satan seem to be winning the battle, in the end God will be victorious and will give that victory to his believing children who remain faithful until the end.”*

Jesus--The Lion and the Lamb

- Often we are uncomfortable with the victorious-returning-judging Jesus (**Print and read Revelation 1: 7-16**)
 1. Because it confronts the devastation and consequence of sin (vs. 7-8)
 1. A quote of the prophet Zechariah to show us that there is a day and time when all of us will stand before him
 2. *“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” John 5:28-29*
 3. We need to get serious about the serious business of sin in our lives
- 2. Because our mortal frailness is contrasted to His immortal power and holiness (vs. 9-15)
 1. **Ills.: Making Jesus Fit**
 2. This picture of Jesus is terrifying but causes us to confront our denial of the reality of our world and life
- 3. Because we have to get honest quickly with who He is and who we are (vs. 16)
 1. Jesus' word is like a two-edge sword cutting through our justifications and excuses of sinfulness
 - *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12*
 2. Jesus cuts through all the *bologna* and says will you **let me be your Savior rather than your Judge**
- During Holy Week do not fail to see the human touch of the King (**Print and read Revelation 1: 4-6, 17-18**)
 4. Because Jesus comes to touch us with his grace and peace and love (vs. 4-6)
 1. Jesus suffers for us not because we deserve it as “good people” but because we need it
 2. Jesus lays his life down as the “*peace offering*” (O.T. analogy) to put us right with God
 3. Jesus gives up his life for us because he loves us
 - *“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” John 15: 13*
 5. Because Jesus comes to touch us with his human compassion (vs. 17)
 1. *“He place his right hand on me and said, ‘Don't be afraid!’”*
 2. **Ills.:** The same thing that Jesus did to John on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17)
 3. *“He had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people”*

Hebrews 2:16-17

4. **Ills.: Jesus Understands our suffering**

6. Because Jesus comes to touch us with his life-giving resurrection from the dead (vs. 18)
 1. Jesus is the first to rise of many to follow (“*first-born from the dead*”)—not a martyr whom we remember
 - “*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*” Heb. 2: 14
 2. Jesus stands beside us in the moment of our death and says, “*Don’t be afraid—I’m in control—I hold the keys*”

Making Jesus Fit

The only real Jesus is one who is larger than life, who escapes our categories, who eludes our attempts to reduce him to manageable proportions so that we can claim him for our cause. Any Jesus who has been made to fit our formula ceases to be appealing precisely because he is no longer wondrous, mysterious, surprising. We may reduce him to a right-wing Republican conservative or a gun-toting Marxist revolutionary and thus rationalize and justify our own political ideology. But having done so, we are dismayed to discover that whoever we have signed on as an ally is not Jesus. Categorize Jesus and he isn't Jesus anymore. **Citation: Andrew Greeley's introduction to Lloyd C. Douglas's *The Robe*, paperback edition (*New York Times Book Review*). Christianity Today, Vol. 30, no. 9.**

Jesus understands suffering

When Detroit sportswriter Mitch Albom heard his favorite college professor, whom he hadn't seen in 20 years, was dying of Lou Gehrig's disease, he renewed their friendship through weekly meetings. In his best-selling book, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Albom describes their visits, focusing on his old professor's wit and insights. During one of their conversations, Mitch asked Morrie Schwartz why he bothered following the news since he wouldn't be around to see how things would turn out anyway. In response, Morrie offered a brilliant insight into empathy:

It's hard to explain, Mitch. Now that I'm suffering I feel closer to people who suffer than I ever did before. The other night on TV I saw people in Bosnia running across the street, getting fired on, killed, innocent victims^{1/4}and I just started to cry. I feel their anguish as if it were my own. I don't know any of these people. But—how can I put this?—I'm almost drawn to them.

Jesus understands our sufferings in a special way since he himself suffered. **Citation: Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois**

Rev. 1:4-18

⁴John, 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, ⁵and 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, ⁶and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

⁷Look, 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." ⁹I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." ¹²I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven

golden lampstands, ¹³and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.