

Sermon Series: “You’ve Got Mail”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—8/31/2008

Title: “Royal Mail in the Postman’s Bag”

Text: Revelation 1: 1-20

Intro.: *Illus.: How I sort my mail (determining junk mail from the real stuff) Is that what we do with Revelation?*

Theme: With a letter of intense mystery sent by personal delivery from our Sovereign Lord and Savior Jesus, we are challenged to follow his lead as he navigates our journey of faith for us until we safely make it home to heaven.

Why we can trust the words of this book which has such divergent interpretation

- Fear over something which we can’t control, understand, or rationally explain
 1. Often, the things of God are beyond us because God is infinite and beyond us
 - a. “Nothing but a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.” Winston Churchill
 - b. John has an audience with Jesus, the glorified Son of God, almost beyond words (**Rev. 1: 4-8**)
 - c. Our issue is not a scary Jesus but a dumbed-down view/respect for Jesus the Son of God with all authority
 2. But that is why he sent us his Son in the flesh, so we relate to him—to God in the flesh
 - a. *The one who existed from the beginning is the one we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is Jesus Christ, the Word of life. 1 John 1:1*
 3. Coming to grips with needing a powerful and glorious Jesus as our Savior
 - a. **Revelation 1: 9-16**
 - b. *For we were not making up clever stories when we told you about the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and his coming again. We have seen his majestic splendor with our own eyes. 2 Peter 1:16*
- God’s final word in Jesus’ words in Revelation
 1. *Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. Hebrews 1:1-2*
 2. ***The revelation by Jesus Christ . . . vs. 1***
 3. Jesus comes to His Church, to us, as the Good Shepherd who speaks his final word to the church
 - a. ***This is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. vs.3***
 - b. Knows the spiritual dangers around every curve in life’s road and delivers us because he doesn’t want to lose us
 - c. *While I was with them, I kept them safe by the power of your name, the name that you gave me. I watched over them, and none of them, except one person, became lost. So Scripture came true. Jn 17:12*
 - d. In the weeks to come he will confront us in the first three chapters with a as piercing and as currently relevant of a message as you will find anywhere in Scripture--far more than any books at Borders or Barnes and Noble

What to expect as we read Jesus’ letters to us, His Church

- Jesus stands in the center of His church at the center of His Word to us
 1. No matter how weak the church seems, how flawed or unfaithful, it is always is by grace and faith we are saved
 2. Not allowing false messages of legalistic Christianity or secular humanism put our hopeless focus back on self
 - a. **Illus.: Burgers or Bible?**
 3. Does Jesus stand as the center of your life and faith and hope? **Revelation 1: 17-18**
- God still speaks to us through the authority of His Word of the ages
 1. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Heb 4:12
 2. When the current trend in Christianity is to seek the words of writers to tell us what God’s Word says about life, Jesus’ call is for us to *search the Scriptures because you believe they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! (John 5:39)*
- Although more and more our culture shows disdain for Jesus and His Church, we are compelled to fall at his feet
 1. Surrender to Jesus’ lordship in our lives means that we are humble before Jesus in our relationship
 - a. *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. vs. 17*
 - b. *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. Romans 6:13*
 2. Submit to the necessary heart surgery because of the Great Physician who wills nothing but our eternal benefit
 - a. **Ills.: Heart By-passes and changed life-style**

- b. Hard-hitting letters to the churches not meant to sugar-coat but to call us back to life that Jesus brings
- c. ***"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later." vs. 19***

Churchill Quote

Nothing but a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." Winston Churchill, as quoted in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, 15th ed., rev. and enl., ed. Emily Morison Beck (Boston, Mass: Little, Brown and Co., 1980), p. 743

Burgers or Bible?

More people remember the ingredients on America's favorite burger than remember the ingredients in America's favorite book, according to the latest study. In anticipation of the new animated movie release of *The Ten Commandments*, Kelton Research conducted a poll of 1,000 people to determine basic knowledge of the Ten Commandments. Eighty percent of those polled knew that a Big Mac had two all-beef patties and 62 percent knew that it had pickles. But less than 50 percent could remember even seven of the Decalogue. Further polling via "man on the street" interviews also bore grave news. Testing knowledge of the Ten Commandments versus popular culture knowledge, most people polled could remember the names of all four of the Beatles rock group, but many could not even remember one commandment. **"Which Do You Know Better?" *Houston Chronicle* (10-19-07)**

Heart By-passes and Changed Life-style

A [2006] medical study reveals just how difficult change is for people. Roughly 600,000 people have heart bypasses a year in America. These people are told after their bypasses that they must change their lifestyle. The heart bypass is a temporary fix. They must change their diet. They must quit smoking and drinking. They must exercise and reduce stress. In essence, the doctors say, "Change or die." You would think that a near-death experience would forever grab the attention of the patients. You would think they would vote for change. You would think the argument for change is so compelling that the patients would make the appropriate lifestyle alterations. Sadly that is not the case. Ninety percent of the heart patients do not change. They remain the same, living the status quo. Study after study indicates that two years after heart surgery, the patients have not altered their behavior. Instead of making changes for life, they choose death. Change is that difficult. The majority of the heart patients choose not to change. They act as if they would rather die. **Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church* (B & H Publishing Group, 2006), p. 229**

Rev. 1:1-20

¹The revelation by Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ²who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. ³Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

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 Hades. ¹⁹"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. ²⁰The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. [NIV]