

Resurrection Sunday

April 1, 2018

Sermon Title: "How to Survive the Penetrating Appearance of the Risen Lord".

Scripture Reading: Revelation 1:12–20

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, 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. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. 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.

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, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. (ESV)

Introduction: Just exactly what does Jesus look like right now in glory? Does he look like what John saw when he leaned on Jesus' chest at the last supper? Does he look like what Peter saw on the Mt. of Transfiguration? Does he look like what the disciples saw in the upper room on the morning he was raised from the dead? If so, why did the Apostle John not immediately run up to Jesus and hug him in Revelation 1 like he did before. Instead he fell at Jesus' feet like a dead man. How do you think you will react when you see Jesus? Warm hugs? Dead man chills and fear? A high five?

How Can we Survive His Penetrating Appearance?

His Majestic Appearance is Always Unnerving

1. Believers in the OT were terrified when Jesus appeared to them in person.
 - *Joshua 5:13–15* When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so. (ESV)
 - *Isaiah 6:5* And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (ESV)

- *Ezekiel 1:28 Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking. (ESV)*
 - *Daniel 10:6–8 His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. (ESV)*
2. Saul of Tarsus fell to the ground in Acts 9. He was a non-believer. Just so, all non-believers will fall face down at the appearance of Jesus.
 3. The Apostle John was terrified when he was transported to heaven and saw the living Savior. He was a believer. So both non-believers and believers will fall face down in fear at the presence of Jesus. Go to Revelation 1.
 - The symbols of power and holiness:
 - i. Jesus was clothed in a long robe with a golden sash representing his role as our High Priest. *Exodus 28:4 These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests. (ESV)*
 - ii. Jesus' hair was white like snow representing his eternal nature and position. From Daniel 7:9 The Father was imaged in this way as well.
 - iii. His eyes were like flames of fire. His penetrating eyes see everything including every deed, thought and motive. How do you survive that?
 - iv. His feet looked like they had been in a furnace. This is always a symbol of purity.
 - v. His voice sounded like Niagra Falls implying immense power. He's the God who spoke Niagra Falls into existence.
 - vi. His words cut sharper than a razor edged sword. These are words of judgment like a judge giving a verdict and slamming down the gavel.
 - vii. His right hand holds the seven stars. i.e. He is sovereign and nothing is outside of his control.

His Majestic Appearance is Always Unnerving:

But for those who love Him It is only Momentary

- Jesus did not want John to be alarmed any longer than necessary. *Revelation 1:17–18 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, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. (ESV)*
 - It was necessary for John to be alarmed because 1) Jesus is no longer holding back his majestic glory and 2) because the Book of Revelation requires the full

disclosure of His glory and power.

- But once the initial fright had been experienced, (this is unavoidable for reasons above) Jesus removes the fear by connecting in John's mind Jesus' risen form to what John previously knew and experienced.
 - Jesus reached out with his right hand of power and it became the right hand of fellowship and love.
 - Jesus, in a familiar voice spoke words of comfort to John by saying "Fear not". Jesus does not want his children to be scared of his glorious appearance even though it is beyond frightening. He knows this is a very uncomfortable feeling.
 - Jesus assures John that He is the same person John wrote about in his gospel. The theme of the book of John is this: Jesus is God. So, John 1:1-3 is reconfirmed here by Jesus' words.
 - Jesus also reminds John that he is the same person John knew and worshiped after Jesus' resurrection by saying I am the living one. So, the very God whom John hugged closely even after the resurrection is the one who is alive and speaking to John now. There is only one person in all the universe who can say that. It is Jesus of Nazareth.
 - To make it even more clear, Jesus reminds John that he is the one who died and is now alive forevermore. In the grave, Jesus was in the immediate state, just like our loved ones are now. But on Sunday morning he became the firstfruit and took his glorified body upon himself. He is the only human to do so until the final resurrections when all saints get their glorified bodies. Therefore the voice and person is unmistakably Jesus.
 - Finally, Jesus reminds John that no one but him has the keys of death and Hades. It is Jesus who decides who remains dead and who remains in Hades and who doesn't. This reminds us of what he said in John 8 and 11.
John 8:51–52 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' (ESV)
 - John 11:25–26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* (ESV)

His majestic appearance is always unnerving:

But for those who love Him it is only momentary,

But for those who don't it is eternal.

Revelation 20:11–15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and

small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (ESV)

Conclusion

What does all this make Easter? It certainly is not about Easter bunnies and Easter eggs. That is all from pagan origins. It is not about Easter dresses or Easter candy and no one likes candy more than me. But if the central message of Easter is hidden behind all of these distractions then we will be slow to reveal to the world the real meaning of Easter which is this. Everyone will face Jesus soon, either through death or through His coming again. When that happens there will be for everyone an initial breathtaking fear. For believers it will last a moment. For those who refuse to bow the knee to Him it will last an eternity.

The gospel means . . .this.