

Easter Late
March 27, 2016
Revelation 1:4-6
A Timeless Easter Greeting
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Brothers and sisters in Christ,

A greeting sets the stage for what follows. Think of greeters at a funeral home visitation. Their somber “Hello” leads to no surprises. We know to expect death.

Think of God greeting his Son after Jesus commended his spirit into his Father’s hands. “Welcome home Son. Well done. After your body has lain three days in the tomb, I will raise it.” This greeting set the state for Jesus’ total exaltation so he would rule over all things.”

As the women stood at the entrance to Jesus’ empty tomb, the angels greeted them with this good news, “He is not here; he has risen just as he said.” [Mt. 28:6]. The women were surprised. The angels’ greeting frightened them. Yet this Easter greeting set the stage for their joy, comfort and hope. When we came to worship today we knew just what to expect by the angel’s greeting. No surprises. Jesus lives our victory is won!

This Easter greeting sets the table of our blessings as it did for the early Christians in Asia Minor. John began his letters to the believers in the churches with **A Timeless Easter Greeting**. It is a greeting that extends grace and peace. It is a greeting from God.

Some greetings cause fear and trembling. I remember back in the day when some of my friends received a letter of greetings from their draft board during the Vietnam War. How many of you would be happy to have the IRS send its greetings?

The Christians John wrote to in these seven churches in the province of Asia were suffering great poverty and persecution. John was in exile during this persecution on a rock pile called Patmos in the Aegean Sea. The believers also were enduring all kinds of spiritual temptations, some of which had gotten the better of them at times.

Yet God did not greet John or the churches in anger. God greeted them with sweet words, “Grace and peace to you..” What did that greeting lead to? God reassured his undeserved love was always with them. He was not hostile to them but at peace with them. They had no need to fear their enemies, or let their crosses crush them as if they

were alone. Those are the same expectations you may have from the sermon when your pastor greets you with those words before he begins preaching. The gospel we hear is God’s timeless Easter greeting.

Jesus’ resurrection is the beating heart of that Easter greeting. John gave his believers a greeting to hang their faith on every day of their cross bearing lives. Even when God rebuked them through John for their sin and called them to repentance, it all followed his greeting of grace and peace.

Grace and peace are the essence of the greeting the angels spoke on the first Easter morning. Jesus greeted his fearful disciples late in the day, “Peace.” Our believing hearts greet us every morning with grace and peace as we prepare to go to work, or to school, or to face those medical test results, or deal with the animosity of a family member, or bear some other unexpected cross the Lord lays on our shoulders. Even when the Lord calls me to repentance for my sins his grace and peace are the context for his concern.

John knew grace and peace also will be Christ’s greeting when he comes again. Our sermon text also is one of the lectionary lessons for the last Sunday of the church year when we look for Jesus to return. How we look forward to hearing our Savior speak that timeless Easter greeting, “Grace and peace to you.” as he comes in glory to take us into the kingdom of heaven forever.

Who is the source of the timeless Easter greeting of grace and peace the angels, Jesus, and John extend? It is a greeting from God.
2. “Grace and peace to you,” John wrote, “from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”

We are here this morning, and gather every Sunday morning to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection from death and the tomb. Jesus Christ is the “firstborn from the dead.” Our risen Lord is the cause and source of all physical resurrections from death because he is death’s conqueror. You may have heard someone use the expression, “I own that guy.” This means complete control over someone. Jesus our risen Savior owns death. He has complete control over it. The Son owns all the kings of the earth. He has complete control over them. The Father exalted his Son Jesus as his reward for the redemptive work he did on our behalf.

The eternal Father who is unchangeable, and the Holy Spirit, referred to by the seven gifts he endows to believers, also are the source of grace and peace. What one person of the Holy Trinity does, the other two do as well. God the Father accepted the Son's sacrifice. The Holy Spirit gives us the blessings of that sacrifice through the gospel in Word and sacrament.

Our God in Jesus Christ "loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father." Our risen Lord speaks to us in the Word. He greets us with words of grace and peace established by his death and set in action by his resurrection. We live in his kingdom and have direct access to our Father through him.

God's timeless Easter greeting, "Grace and peace to you..." leads to no surprises. We know to expect the forgiveness of our sins, our resurrection from the dead, and life everlasting in heaven. Our timeless Easter response echoes the apostle John's, "To him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen." <SDG>