

My Fellow Redeemed In Christ,

Easter Is Over.....Well.....Not Really....Every Sunday Is Easter. Jesus Is Alive Forevermore. We Celebrate His Resurrection Just As Much Today As We Did Last Sunday. But It's Hard To Remember That Jesus Is Alive And Well.....After All...We Can't See Him.....And It's Even Hard To Remember That Jesus Actually Is Ruling Over All Things.....Again.....We Can't See Him Ruling. But Whether We Know It Or Not That's What We Confess In The Creed Every Sunday. But Notice That In The Creeds We Say "**I Believe**" And Not "**I See**"...... And Because We Do Not See This Life's Circumstances Might Lead Us To Doubt That He Is Ruling. But This Has Always Been True.....Which Brings Me To Our Text For Today.....When The Apostle John Wrote The Book Of Revelation.....It Wasn't Obvious That Jesus Was Ruling Over All Things. Because Of Persecution, John Had Been Exiled To A Small Island Called **Patmos**. And The Churches In His Area Were Having All Kinds Of Problems. And This Is Why John Received This Revelation From Jesus Christ In Order To Comfort And Strengthen These Churches In The Knowledge That Jesus Christ Truly Ruled Over All Things. And That's Our Message For Us Today: That We Too Might Receive Comfort And Hope In "**Our Risen And Ruling Lord**".

I. Our Lord Jesus Rules In His Church Which We Call His "Kingdom Of Grace".

A. Jesus Lives And Rules In The Midst Of All Of Those Who Trust In Him As Their Savior...And Especially As They Are Gathered Together In Congregations. In The Vision The Golden Lamp Stands Symbolize The Seven Congregations. And John Saw That Jesus Was With His People As We Read, "...And In The Midst Of The Lamp Stands One Like A Son Of Man...." (V. 13, Esv). Yes, Jesus Is Always With His People As He Says At The End Of Matthew's Gospel, "**I Am With You Always, To The End Of The Age**" (28: 20, Esv). Because But We Cannot See Him... It Is Easy To Forget That Jesus Is With Us And That He Comes To Us In His Chosen Means Of Grace, His Word And Sacraments. And Jesus Gives The Gift Of Pastors To His Church Which Are Symbolized By The Seven Stars As John Says, "**In His Right Hand He Held Seven Stars...**" (V. 16, Esv). The Pastors Are The Ones Who Administer The Means Of Grace, His Word And Sacraments To His People.....As We Also Read, "**From His Mouth Came A Sharp Two Edge Sword....**" (V.16, Esv). This Two Edge Sword Is God's Word...And The Two Edges Are God's Law And God's Gospel. God's Law Shows Us Our Sin And Condemns Us And Makes Us Feel Guilty. This Is Why When John Saw The Vision Of Jesus Christ In All His Glory And Holiness He Says, "**When I Saw Him, I Fell At His Feet As Though Dead...**" (V. 17, Esv). This Was The Fear Of A Guilty Man. But Then What Do We Read? "**But He Laid His Right Hand On Me, Saying, 'Fear Not'....**" (V. 17, Esv). This Is The Other Side Of The Sword Of God's Word, The Gospel...The Good News Of Jesus Christ That Jesus Has Died For Our Sins And That Our Debt To God Has Been Fully Canceled, Giving Us Forgiveness And Victory Over Death As Jesus Says, "**I Have The Keys Of Death**

And Hades" (V. 18, Esv). Jesus Has Freed Us From Death And Hades. Jesus Has Given These Keys To His Church And Especially To His Pastors As He Says In Matthew's Gospel, **"I Will Give You The Keys Of The Kingdom Of Heaven, And Whatever You...Loose On Earth Shall Be Loosed In Heaven" (16: 19, Esv).** The Pastors Use These Keys Of The Means Of Grace To Give God's People The Forgiveness That Jesus Christ Has Won For Them So That The Holy Spirit Might Create And Strengthen Faith In Jesus. And In This Way Jesus Christ Rules In Our Hearts, Which Means We Not Only Believe In Him But We Want To Live For Him As John Writes, **"To Him Who Loves Us And Freed Us From Our Sins....And Made Us A Kingdom Of Priests...." (V. 6, Esv).** **"A Kingdom Of Priests".** Yes, Even Though We Cannot See Him...Through His Word And Sacraments Jesus Rules In His Church In The Hearts Of Those Who Believe In Him. This Is His Kingdom Of Grace.

B. But Jesus Also Rules Over The Whole World But Not In The Word Of His Grace And Forgiveness....But In His Kingdom Of Power. As We Confess In The Creeds, Jesus Now Sits At The Right Hand Of God The Father Almighty. This Means That Jesus Now Fully And Always Uses His Power As God....This Is Seen In The Vision Of Jesus Christ That John Saw: A Figure Of Imposing Majesty And Power That Caused John To Fall As A Dead Man Before Him. So John Writes, **"John To The Seven Churches....And From Jesus Christ....The Ruler Of The Kings Of The Earth." (Vv. 4, 5, Esv).** **"...The Ruler Of The Kings Of The Earth."** Because He Is God In Human Form, Jesus Rules Over This World To Do What Is Best For His Church In Bringing The Gospel To All As Jesus Says At The End Of Matthew's Gospel: **"All Authority In Heaven And On Earth Has Been Given To Me" (28: 18, Esv).** Jesus Has The Authority Of God To Rule Over Heaven And Earth...And Then What Does Jesus Say Next? **"Go Therefore And Make Disciples Of All Nations..... And Behold, I Am With You Always, To The End Of The Age".** Jesus Is Saying.....Go And Tell Everyone About Me.....Preaching And Sharing The Gospel.....Knowing That I Rule Over All Things And I Will Be With You. In Other Words, Jesus Rules In His Kingdom Of Power For The Benefit Of His Rule In His Kingdom Of Grace.

ii. Of Course None Of The Things Can Be Seen Or Proven. Not One. This Is A Matter Of Faith..... A Person Either Believes These Things Or They Do Not. And It Would Seem That History And Experience Contradict The Rule Of Jesus Christ.....In Both The Church, His Kingdom Of Grace, And The World, His Kingdom Of Power..

A. Let's Take His Kingdom Of Grace First. It Is Not Obvious That Jesus Rules In The Church: There Are Many Divisions In The Church That Are Due To Different Teachings By Different Christian Groups. And There Is Plenty Of Sin To See In The Christian Church....In The Past There Was The Inquisition And The Militant Crusades, And Today There Are Sexually Immoral Priests And Pastors.....And There Is Plenty Of Apathy Among Christians.....Many Christians Don't Seem Very Dedicated.....With Many Not Even Going To Church On A Regular Basis. But This Has Been Around For A Long Time. In His

Revelation Jesus Ordered John To Write To The Seven Churches In The Roman Province Of Asia. He Criticizes Them All....Some For Holding To False Doctrine Like. The Church In **Thyatira: "...You Tolerate That Woman Jezebel, Who Calls Herself A Prophetess ..."** (2: 20, Esv); And In **Pergamum: ": "You Have Some There Who Hold The Teaching Of Balaam... So Also You Have Some Who Hold The Teaching Of The Nicolaitans"** (2: 14, 15, Esv) Other Congregations Had Become Apathetic And Lazy To In Their Dedication To Christ And His Mission Such As **Ephesus: "...You Have Abandoned The Love You Had At First"** (2: 4, Esv); And **Laodicea: "“I Know Your Works: You Are Neither Cold Nor Hot. Would That You Were Either Cold Or Hot! ¹⁶ So, Because You Are Lukewarm... I Will Spit You Out Of My Mouth"** (2: 15, 16, Esv). It Has Never Been Obvious That Jesus Is Ruling In His Church.

B. Nor Do We See Jesus Ruling In This World. Instead, We See All Kinds Of Evil And Violence....Against Christians Who Are Persecuted In Many Parts Of The World. But That Was Already Happening In John's Day As In The Church In **Smyrna: "“I Know Your Tribulation And Your Poverty....Do Not Fear What You Are About To Suffer"** (2: 9, 10, Esv). So We Do Not Say That Jesus Rules The Church And The World Because We See It. We Say That Jesus Rules The Church And The World Because He Gives Us His Word And Promise. Those Early Christians Could Have Easily Doubted That Jesus Was Ruling.....Their Experience In Life Seemed To Deny It.....And So It Has Been For Some Two Thousand Years.....Right Down To Our Own Day. And This Is Why We Have Not Only The Book Of Revelation.....But All Of The Bible To Comfort Us And Encourage Us In The Midst Of Things That Seem To Contradict And Deny Our Faith. In John's Gospel Jesus Tells Us: **"In This World You Will Have Tribulation"** (16: 33, Esv). But Then He Goes On To Say, **"...But Take Heart...I Have Overcome The World"** (16: 33, Esv). And So John Writes In Our Text, **"I, John Your Brother And Partner In The Tribulation And The Kingdom And The Patient Endurance That Are In Jesus Christ...."** (V. 9, Esv).

Conclusion: In His Second Letter To The Corinthians The Apostle Paul Pretty Much Summarizes What John Tells Us This Morning, **"...For We Walk By Faith, Not By Sight"** (5: 7, Esv). In Our Gospel Lesson Jesus Told Thomas The Same Thing, **"Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen And Yet Have Believed"** (John 20: 30, Esv). We Live Our Lives Then Not On The Basis Of What We See And Experience....But We Live Our Lives On What God Has Told In His Word And Especially About Jesus Christ. But One Day This Will Change. Listen To What John Says In Verse Seven: **"Behold, He Is Coming With The Clouds, And Every Eye Will See Him, Even Those Pierced Him, And All Tribes Of The Earth Will Wail On Account Of Him."** One Day Jesus Will Visibly Return To Judge The Living And The Dead....And On That Day He Will Say To All Who Have Trusted In Him.....To All Who Have Lived By Faith In His Word And Promises.....**Fear Not, I Am The First And The Last, And The Living One. I Died And Behold I Am**

Alive Forevermore....." (V. 18, Esv). And From That Moment On All Of Us Who Have Lived By Faith In His Word And Promise Will Also Be **Alive.... Forevermore.** Amen.