

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 9 May 2021

Sermon Title : The Time is Near

Speaker : Rev Chan Mei Ming

Text : Revelation 1

INTRODUCTION

The most famous last words ever written are found in the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible. But the most famous does not mean it is most admired or most well understood. Instead, many are confused by images of beasts, dragons, horsemen, scenes of violence, blood, suffering, and God's wrath and doom in the book. In this late time in which we live, this book attracts our attention.

It was probably in AD 95 that the apostle John wrote Revelation while in his 80s. He was unjustly banished to Patmos, a tiny Greek Island in the Aegean Sea because he refused to acknowledge the Roman emperor Domitian as lord. Instead, he proclaimed Jesus Christ was the only Lord and Savior. In his lonely exile, John received visions from God and he wrote them down, to starkly remind us of the reality of God and to help us make sense of our life especially when things are not what it should or could be.

Revelation - Hope in difficult times

Revelation is a book of hope in difficult times whether locally or globally, as the world needs hope. It speaks of things that are about to happen soon and we stand at a fortunate time to see God working towards the completion of His plan. We are blessed when we read, hear and keep the things written in this prophetic book. (v.3)

There are two things that we should be mindful of today, because the time is near:

1. Take to heart the Word of God (vv.1-8)
2. See Christ for who He is (vv.9-20)

1. Take to heart the Word of God (vv.1-8)

- a) Jesus Christ, the "Word made flesh" (John 1:14)
 - The Word is not a philosophical idea or some dried ink on paper. The Word was from the beginning; Jesus was seen, heard and touched by human hands.
- b) Scripture, as God's written Word
 - Scripture is a blessing as each generation has access to it and gets to know that God still speaks to us today. Scripture is also a mixed blessing as the

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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written Word is in danger of being reduced to something that we study and interpret. Too often, we do not hear God's word personally as it does not penetrate our heart.

Similarly, the first century religious leaders knew Scripture well and revered it, they memorized it, using it to meticulously regulate every aspect of their daily life. They studied the Word but they did not hear God's voice as the Word did not penetrate their hearts.

Taking to heart the Word of God is the human act of hearing that becomes
"believing, following and loving". - Eugene Peterson

Question: How much do we really love the Bible?

The Bible is not a piece of good literature. It is neither a tool to grow our literary prowess nor to sharpen our religious competence. Instead, the Bible is a living and active sword, for cleaving our double minded thoughts and motives, exposing and transforming the contents of our hearts. (Heb 4:12)

"Lectio Divina" (Latin for "Sacred Reading"), an ancient practice of Bible reading is a vital means in taking to heart the Word of God. It is about reading with a listening spirit (lectio), reflecting on what we are hearing (meditatio), praying in response to the hearing we have done (oratio), and contemplation (contemplatio) that rests in the loving presence of God. It is about responding to God's Word and grace and when these elements are combined, it will lead the human spirit into a dynamic interaction with the Holy Spirit.

Taking to heart the Word of God in the crucible of the times in which we live, makes deeper spiritual formation, conformation and transformation of our hearts.

2) See Christ for Who He is (vv.9-20)

a) Revelation stresses Christ is centre and at the centre!

- Many of us may not get the imagery that John portrayed of Jesus in vv.12-16. This is the picture of the risen Christ that we need to remember beyond the cross:
 - The faithful Witness - speaks only the words from the Father (v.5)
 - The Firstborn from the dead – the resurrected Christ (v.5)
 - Ruler of the kings of the earth – Christ seated by the right hand of God the Father (v.5)
 - Jesus who loves, with sacrificial love to free us from our sins – a picture of Jesus on the cross (v.5)

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Reading the Gospels, watching a movie like the Passion of Christ, help us recapture how much we are loved.

- John presents more images of Christ in such a way that the centrality of Christ cannot be diminished:
 - The Son of man is a commanding and glorious figure (Daniel 7:13-14)
 - The royal Priest with tremendous purity and wisdom (v.13)
 - One who brings righteous judgement, impending justice, with power (v.14)
 - His voice was powerful (v.15)
 - He controls the cosmos and holds in His right hand with absolute control the seven stars (v.16)
 - He is the First and the Last (v.17)
 - He holds the keys of death and Hades (v.18)
 - Jesus is alive forever and ever (v.18)
 - Jesus placed His hand on John to strengthen and encourage John, who was no stranger to suffering, telling him not to be afraid (v.17)

That's how Jesus is portrayed right from the start: Jesus is centre and at the centre

b) How we see matters

- How you see will determine the way you walk. Many things happening locally and globally can make us feel insecure or lose hope. These things can easily elbow Christ aside from being the centre and taking the centre. How we see Christ in our lives determines the way we walk.
- John is our brother and companion in suffering (v.9). Historians told us that he was arrested, boiled in oil, and made to drink poison but he did not die. Presumably sick and tired of him, the authorities banished him to an island.
- As Christians, we too should neither expect to be spared nor exempted from suffering. We don't go out to look for suffering. But suffering will come looking for us. When that happens, in your mind's eyes and vision, keep Jesus at the centre. Just as He was with John, Jesus is here today to give a fresh touch to our lives.

Keep Jesus at the centre. Keep walking to Him. Keep running to Him. One day you will stand beside your King.

CONCLUSION

Let us continue running to our King who is waiting for us. He has promised He will give us a fresh start and ignite our passion for Him, standing next to us. May we never lose sight of Christ in the busyness of life, but continually seek Him, read His Word and allow it to examine and cleanse us to bring us closer to Him.

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A. Review Sermon Content

Purpose: Reflect on one key takeaway.

Appoint someone to read Revelation 1 twice, slowly.

1. At the end of the reading, the reader will say, ‘This is the Word of the Lord.’

All to respond, “Thanks be to God.” Our response reminds us that this is the Word of the Lord. Just as God had spoken to His people in the past, He is still speaking to us even today, right now.”

- a. As God's word was read, which verse speaks to you the most?

- b.
 - (i) What is the key takeaway for you from the sermon “The Time is Near”?
 - (ii) How will you align the way you live to your key takeaway?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 2a. Why is it important to take to heart the Word of God?
- 2b. How much do you love the Bible or take the Word of God to heart? Rate it on a scale of 1-10, "10" being "the most".
- 2c. How does knowing "Scripture as God's written Word" and "Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh" impact what you will do:
 - i) to know Jesus better?
 - ii) to hear God's voice so that the Word will penetrate your heart, instead of being a philosophical idea or reduced to something you study and interpret?
- 3a. Is "Jesus the centre and at the centre" of your life, in good times and in bad?
- 3b. What is one image of Christ that will encourage you in your trial or suffering?
- 3c. How can your group members encourage or help you achieve 3a by holding on to 3b above, in the following week(s) until your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

4. In Revelation 1, Jesus Christ is called the:
 - (i) Ruler of the kings of the earth – Christ seated by the right hand of God the Father (v.5)
 - (ii) Jesus who loves, with sacrificial love to free us from our sins – a picture of Jesus on the cross (v.5)
 - (iii) Jesus is alive forever and ever (v.18)

Share your testimony on how Christ has been one of the above to you.

OR

Give thanks to God for helping you face the insecurities and trials in your present situation - igniting your passion for Him, and giving you a fresh start and renewed hope.

5. With a prayer partner, take time to pray for the concerns in 3b. and 3c. Commit to encourage each other to keep Jesus at the centre, so you may keep running to Him, and one day stand beside our King.

As a group, pray that every member will take to heart God's Word so you may enjoy the blessing of Scripture, and pass it on so future generations will have access to it and get to know that God still speaks to them.

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