

Do Not Be Afraid

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[0 : 00] Let me share some things with you from God's Word.

If you have a Bible, would you please turn to Revelation 1, 17 and 18. I'm going to talk today about Jesus. Can I talk about Jesus? Would that be okay?

I don't want to talk about who Jesus was or who Jesus is going to be. I want to talk today about who Jesus is in the present tense. Now, don't hear me saying that we should discount who Jesus was. That's the gospel. That is God in the flesh coming and walking among us some 2,000 years ago. And don't hear me saying that we should not look at Revelation and understand what he's going to do as he comes back and all that.

But I think sometimes we miss the whole concept of who he really is. We live in a culture today that doesn't understand who Jesus is. And I believe that we also live in a Christian culture, a church culture, who has either forgotten who he is or just don't live like they know who he is.

[1 : 09] So I want to remind us today of who Jesus is. I'm going to read two verses of Scripture. And as is our tradition, let's stand as we read today from God's Word. Revelation 1, 17 and 18.

Thank you.

You may be seated. May God bless the reading of his Word today. Who is Jesus Christ? John, who was on the Isle of Patmos at the time, is having a revelation of God that if you ever read the book of Revelation, it's hard to understand, isn't it?

All the apocalyptic things that you have to think about and all the symbolism and all the seals and all the different bowls and all those different things that are going on. But before that, he prefaces all that, before he talks to the seven churches of Asia, he prefaces that with an encounter with the living Christ.

Now remember, John is the guy who Jesus loved. He describes himself as the disciple who Jesus loved. Which means that he had a different relationship than the rest.

[2 : 41] He was, I guess we could say he was a little bit closer to Jesus than the rest of the disciples during his earthly presence. When Jesus was on the cross, he was looking down and there was John.

John was the only one at the cross. And there was his mother and two other Marys standing beside her. And he looked at John and he said, John, there's your mom.

Take care of her. You see, he's the one who Jesus would, in the midst of all of that trial and tribulation, in the midst of all of that suffering, look down and want to provide for his mom.

And John was the one who he wanted to take care of his mother. So there was a relationship there that was different.

John, in this revelation now on the Isle of Patmos, he's probably in a cave or there's many caves around that island. He's probably in a cave. He's been tortured. Do you know that John was actually, the tradition tells us, that John was actually boiled in oil and lived through it?

[3 : 52] And then when he didn't die, the Romans said, okay, if that's the case, then you're going out here to this remote island where we can't hear from you anymore. We don't want to hear the word of God.

We certainly don't want to be around anybody. Well, it was that close to Jesus as you were, so you're going to the Isle of Patmos. And in his scars and in his burns, there he was in the midst of that little island and in that cave.

And suddenly the Bible says he was caught up with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit came upon him, and the first thing he began to see was, one like the Son of Man, as it says in verse 9 and following.

If you want to read there while I'm talking, you can do that, and you can see the different places and the different things that he was, who he was and what he looked like, and how he had his head.

In verse 14, his head and hair were like wool. It's white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. [4 : 55] In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth was a sharp two-edged sword. His face was like the sun, shining in all of its brilliance. This guy who knew Jesus, who without a doubt if he were to look up and see the Jesus that he knew, it says there in verse 17, when I saw him, I fell at his feet though dead.

Literally what happened here was, John was scared to death. Have you ever, I'm sure you've said that, well that scared me to death. I can't believe, well that's just scary.

You know, you've been on some ride at an amusement park, or you've been in some spook house during Halloween, or you want to talk about different things, and how you're afraid of certain things and all that.

It's literally scared him to death. The next words are very important, for that's the title of today's message, when he says, do not, he placed his hand on my, he placed his right hand on me and said, do not be afraid.

Did you know that the Bible has that command, do not be afraid, more than any other command? In the English Bible, in the Bible itself, it's 365 times.

[6 : 17] You know why? What's also 365? The year. Yeah, well that's true, that's 66, so we're going to miss yesterday, okay? But the Lord says, do not be afraid for every day of the week.

Why? Because we're all afraid. You say, oh, I'm not afraid of nothing. I'm a big old boy, I'm not afraid of nothing. Nothing going to scare me, I'm not afraid of anything. Yeah, you are.

I had a supervisor in my, my previous life at, the South Carolina Baptist Convention. David was my supervisor, David Parks, and David was six foot four, and he weighed about 250 to 270 pounds. He was a football player, a big old boy. And he was kind of one of those guys who said, I'm not afraid of nothing. I'm not afraid of nobody. But you know the person who scared him the most? Cindy Hale. Who is four foot, whatever, and I won't say how much she weighs. But anyway, somebody's afraid. You're afraid of something.

[7 : 25] You're afraid of somebody. Everyone in this room is fearful of something or somebody. Some of you are here today and you're afraid of death. You're afraid of suffering.

You know what the number one thing people say they're afraid of? They took a survey. I like these surveys. You know what the number one thing people are afraid of? Public speaking. You know what the number two thing is?

Death. In other words, they'd rather die than get up and do public speaking. We're all afraid of something. But listen to these words from the Lord Himself and let those words come out of the Scripture and actually speak to your life today because I'm going to talk more about who Jesus is as a result of this.

Do not be afraid. Now before he did that, he put his hand, his right hand, his strong arm, his right arm, his right hand on the shoulder of John and he said, hey, don't be afraid.

And he then began to describe who he was, who he is, and what he has done for us. First and foremost, he said, do not be afraid because I am the first and the last.

[8 : 40] In verse 8, he says, I am the alpha and the omega, which you know is the A to Z in the Greek alphabet. Now he also said, and then he says here, I am the first and the last.

I am the beginning and I am the end. I was at the beginning, you know, you'll read in Genesis 1, 1, in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. If you'll go on to read those first three chapters or so, you'll find out that it was, they refer to, God is referred to in the plural, in the we, which means God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were there creating the world so Jesus was there at the first.

Jesus was there in the beginning. In John's gospel, he says, John says, in the beginning, what? In the beginning was the Word and it's a capital W and the Word was with God and the Word, you see, it's all about who Jesus is.

He's in the beginning. At the beginning of everything is Jesus. at the end of everything is Jesus. When you were born, the beginning date on your life, when you were there and you were born out of your mother's womb, he was there.

As a matter of fact, he was there when you were conceived and he saw you being knitted inside of your mother's womb. He was there. He was there in your beginning and he will be there in your ending, whatever that may be.

[10 : 14] If you go out to a graveyard today, you'll go out and you'll see these monuments to the person who is buried there in that grave and they'll have a beginning date of when they were born and then they'll have what it's called in the industry, I found this out recently, what it's called in the industry, the end date.

The beginning date and the end date and then there's that little dash in between. You see, we see, if you don't know these people who you're out there looking at these monuments, you see when they were born and you see when they died but you know very little about what's in between. Now, Jesus didn't just say this because he wanted you to know that he showed up at the beginning and he's going to show up at the end. The truth is, he showed up at the end. He's the A to Z but he's also the A, B, C, D all through that.

You see, Jesus is not just showing up at the beginning and then showing up at the end. Jesus is here today. Jesus is the one who by his very presence gives us the strength that we need to get through the day.

He is the one by his very presence is with us and in us. He says, I am the beginning, I'm the end, and I'm everything else in between. I am the all in all.

[11 : 35] You know, Dennis Jernigan wrote that song back in the early 90s. If you know Dennis, and I went to OBU with Dennis, and Dennis has struggled with his own sexuality and he came out of that and God delivered him and the reason he wrote that song is because he came to the process of realizing that Jesus was his all in all, that he gets his identity not through his sexuality but he gets his identity through Jesus Christ.

It is the Lord. He is your everything. Now, beloved, today we're not going to make it through this world unless we come to the realization that Jesus is our all in all.

You may be struggling with a lot of things that you're afraid of today. You may be struggling with a lot of sin that's in your life but folks, I want you to know that we are not going to be successful in this culture or in this world unless we believe with all of our heart that Jesus is our beginning and our ending and everything else in between, that Jesus is the center of our universe because if anything else is the center of your universe and that could be a lot of things, it could be your job, it could be whatever you identify with, it could be your children, it could be your grandchildren, uh-oh, I just got in trouble there, didn't I?

It could be a lot of different things but unless Jesus is your all in all, you're not going to make it. We are Christians, we are followers of Christ who describes himself as the beginning and the end and everything else in between.

It's all about Jesus. You know, these days I hear a lot of celebrities talk and they talk about their relationships with different people and then they'll talk about their relationship with God.

[13 : 22] I very seldom hear them say anything about Jesus and I've noticed that in the church we don't talk much about Jesus these days.

We talk about God and who God is and who God can do this and yet Jesus is God and there's no doubt about that. He's fully and completely God. He was fully and completely man. There's no doubt about that but we have to understand we have got to go back to the premise and to the thing in our life that Jesus is the center of all we do.

He is everything we do. You say, you mean everything? Absolutely everything. You make a decision about one thing or another? Have you consulted Jesus about it?

You say, well no, he doesn't really care about this. Yes, he does. He cares about everything because that one decision may lead to another decision that before you know it you've strayed off the path and you're into something you shouldn't be in.

I've talked to many, many pastors over the years and the reason why they get into trouble morally or they get in trouble in any other way in their church is because they have left their relationship with Jesus and made it, put it to the side.

[14 : 39] Folks, he's got to be the center for he is the beginning and the end. If there was a beginning then there will be an ending.

In the beginning was Jesus, in the ending was Jesus. Second he says in verse 18, I am the living one.

I don't know that we really have a concept of what this really means. Folks, Jesus at this point had already died fully and completely.

Don't let anybody tell you they didn't die on the cross because he did. He died physical death. He'd been put in a tomb for two or three days. Then he rose over the grave and he was resurrected. Then he walked among his disciples for some 40 days before he ascended into heaven. Now, if you were to read the gospel and think, well that was it. He was here, he lived, he died, he was resurrected, he ascended into heaven and that's it.

[15:55] It's over. Nope, nope, nope. For Jesus says here and we must grasp hold of this, I am the living one.

Jesus is alive today. Amen? He's not a dead prophet. He's not a God that sits on a shelf. He is alive today.

He is the only person who ever dwelt on this earth who is still alive because all of us are going to die. All of us are going to die and all of us are going to end up somewhere, aren't we?

But Jesus who died a physical death and was resurrected over the dead is now still alive. That's our hope. That is our hope today.

For we serve a risen Savior who is in the world today. We serve a Savior who is alive today. We serve a Savior who is living among us. That's the difference that we have in Jesus Christ.

[17:01] That's the difference in what we have when we call ourselves evangelical Christians or Christians or whatever you want to call yourself, believers of Christ, followers of Jesus. We have a hope in the fact that we serve a Lord and a Savior who is alive this day.

He says, I am alive, and when the Bible says here, forever and ever, that's emphasis on that that means forever and ever. I looked up the Greek, what it means.

It means forever and ever, okay? It is the word that means forever and ever and ever and ever and ever. Remember when the story says that Jesus was in another part of the country and they came to him and they said, Jesus, you've got to get back to Bethany.

Why? Your friend Lazarus is sick. He's sick unto death. Jesus looked at all his disciples and he said, yeah, let's stick around here for a little while.

Now, most of those disciples probably wondered, what in the world is he doing? And he said, this is for the glory of God that we stay here. And so a few days later, he shows up at Bethany and out comes Martha.

[18:22] Martha comes out, meets him on the trail and says to him, Lord, where in the world have you been? Why?

If you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. But now he's dead and he's in the grave. It's been four days. They put him in the grave. He's dead. I don't know where you've been, but I sure wish you were here.

He looked at Martha and said, look, I am the resurrection and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me. I, Martha, I am the resurrection and the life.

This person who has died is now in the grave, but you're looking at the person who is the resurrection.

And then he went to the grave and he said, roll that stone away. Y'all said, no, no, you don't want to do that. He's been in the grave for four days and as the King James Version says, he stinketh.

[19:31] Jesus went to the grave and he said to his friend who was in dead, he was dead, stone cold dead. And he said to Lazarus, Lazarus, get up.

Get up. And it says that Lazarus came and was alive. You remember when he was walking along the road and he came to a little town called Nain and he came upon a funeral procession and there was a woman who was a widow and her only son had died and he heard the story and he felt so much compassion for the widow that he went to the little boy's little thing he was on that was going to the, he was on the way, he was on the way to the tomb and went over and just touched it and the little boy was alive.

You remember when he was confronted by a guy named Jairus and Jairus said my little girl is sick and you need to come quickly and so he kind of came and he went over there but by the time he got there people met him out there and said Jairus, Jairus, Jairus, don't bother the teacher anymore, the little girl's dead.

You can imagine the heartbreak of Jairus at the time and he went to the house, Jesus said no, no, no, wait a minute and he went on to the house and outside the house were the professional mourners and they were wailing and all this kind of thing and he looked at those people and he said hey, calm down, calm down.

He goes in, he looks at that little girl and he says little girl, get up. Now all those people were raised from the dead, praise God, amen?

[21 : 15] But they died again. Lazarus died again, Jairus' daughter died again, the little boy in Nain died again. All of those people died again but listen, Jesus didn't die again.

Jesus who was dead died one time, was put in a grave and resurrected over the dead. here's the good thing, listen, because we follow a God who is alive, a Jesus who is alive and is living today, because of that we have a hope that in his resurrection and in his way of doing things and his life, we too will be resurrected over the grave.

We have no, I love to go out to the cemetery and tell something funny about the person who has just died because everybody laughs. I love to laugh during the cemetery.

You know why? Because the devil's sitting around going, ha, ha, ha, I got him, I got him, I got him. And then when people laugh, they say, no you didn't. You see, the grave and the cemetery and all of that is not the ending.

Because of our relationship with Christ, because of who we are in Jesus, because Jesus is alive today, we too have that same hope of resurrection.

[22 : 44] Folks, we can go out of this building today and share that with everyone we come in contact with. You see, most of us live as if, and look as if, we have been baptized in persimmon juice and hung out to dry on a wire hanger.

I mean to tell you, we're stiff. We're just, yeah, you can't do that. You know, I just can't believe all this stuff is happening. Why, why, why, our country's going to hell in a handbasket.

I just can't believe that. Look, we got a hope. We're the only hope for this world. The only reason that God the Father has withhold his son coming back is because of us.

Because he's not through with the United States of America yet. He's not through with the world.

We have a hope. Why in the world would you get in an airplane and fly for 24 hours to go share the love of Christ and the resurrection with another people group if you didn't have that hope?

Why in the world would you go through this life? Listen, if this is all there is, and I've lived long enough to know that if this is all there is, who cares? If this is it, I mean, don't get me wrong, I like living.

[23 : 58] And I like, sort of like Bartlesville, and you know what I mean. It's a good place and all that, but if this is all there is, who cares? Folks, our hope is not in this world.

Our hope is not in this flesh, for it will die, but our hope is in the alive Jesus Christ. Lastly, let me say it with you.

He says, I, don't be afraid, I'm the first and the last, I'm the living one, I was dead, and behold, I'm alive forever and ever. And then lastly, he says, I hold the keys of death and hell.

I hold the keys of death and Hades. The death he's referring to here is the second death.

You see, all of us are going to die a physical death, there's no doubt about that. We're all afraid of these viruses that are going around the world today, we're all afraid there's going to be a pandemic that's going to kill us all, we're all afraid of what it may be, our cancer is our worst nightmare, we're all afraid of those things, but listen, we're all going to die.

[25 : 10] How that happens is beyond your control. You can't do anything about it, because we're all going to die of physical death. But Jesus says, I got the key.

I had the key to the second death. What is the second death, you say? It is when you die spiritually. You see, we're first and foremost spiritual beings.

We're not physical beings, we're not emotional beings, we're not mental beings, we're first and foremost spiritual beings. And there's a death unto which none of us want to participate.

Yes, it's inevitable, we're all going to die physically, but we don't have to die spiritually. Why?

Because of Jesus. Why do we not have to be afraid?

Because Jesus holds the key to the second death. He also holds the key to hell, Hades. He has the keys to hell.

[26 : 16] You say, oh, I don't believe in hell, I don't believe that's really, I don't think a righteous God or a loving God would ever send anybody to hell. How can you believe in that? That's terrible, God loves us and he has grace and all that.

He wouldn't send us to hell. You know, he doesn't send anybody to hell, you send yourself to hell.

And you say, well, I'm going to enjoy that. I heard a guy say the other day to his ex-wife, well, I'll see you in hell.

No, you won't. Somebody has said, well, I'm going to have a great time when I'm in hell with my friends. No, you won't. Because hell is a real place.

It really exists. We don't hear much about it these days in these pulpits. Because nobody wants to be in a downer and preach that hellfire and brimstone stuff.

But let me just tell you, with all the love I have in my heart, hell is real. If you do not trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord, if you do not give him your life, if you do not make him the center of your universe, your second death will result in a place called hell.

[27 : 31] We used to hear that a lot when I was growing up. These preachers would come in from every revival, come in from a revival, and we'd have these evangelists, you know, and they'd come in and they'd have their red suit with their white shoes and all that kind of thing back in the 70s.

And boy, they would preach and they'd get red in the face and they'd sweat and spit all over the front row and it was just amazing. And I know a lot of people have been scared of hell and that's the reason they give their life.

I'm not saying that. I'm saying by faith, trusting in the alive Jesus who gave the sacrifice and today who holds the keys to the second death and to hell is the decision that we all need to make.

a decision, yes, we may have made when we were children or a teenager or a young adult or whatever, but it is a decision that we must live by every single day.

Because Jesus is the center of everything. He is the one that will unlock the key, unlock the light, he's got the key, that will unlock the lock that goes to the second death and to hell itself.

[28 : 38] He has it locked if you, by faith, have trusted in him. If you, by faith, have seen his sacrifice as the blood sacrifice of what he has done for you.

Let me just say today, Jesus is the boss. Soon we're going to have our brother come from Latvia to come and visit with you.

When I was in Latvia the first time with, what's his name, Dan. Sorry. My good buddy.

Went to a church and out in the eastern part of Latvia, a little church, they were meeting in a place where the Russians had stored rat poison when they were there.

They went in and cleaned it all up. There was an older man who was there. He's well into his 80s.

He rode his bicycle to church every Sunday and he was there before everybody else.

[29 : 45] On his belt were all the keys to the church. His official title was church boss.

I said, who is it? He said, and the pastor said, well, that's our church boss. I said, really? Yeah. I said, well, I've had a lot of church guys who thought they were the church boss. But anyway, but he had all the keys.

He'd let everybody in. He'd lock up. He did all those things. He owned the keys. Beloved, listen to the words of God through Jesus Christ.

I hold the keys of death and Hades. He's the boss.

Today, by faith, if you want to know this Jesus, we have people here who can help you with that.

Some of you have forgotten that the center of the universe is Jesus Christ.

[30 : 54] Some of you are panicking over this latest pandemic, as they say, that's going to take us and kill us all. I saw on Facebook yesterday a lady who I know, a young lady who I know, that went to the store and bought all of the supplies that she needed, including toilet paper, because the pandemic is coming and she's going to be having you see everybody's panicking.

Now, I'm not going to say it's not going to happen. I don't know. I don't know if it's going to happen or not. But there's no need to panic. There's no need to be afraid. Some of you are living your life in such a guarded way, and in such a box, that you've forgotten who your Savior is.

You've forgotten who your boss is, who your Lord is. He's an alive God. He's the only one who's still alive. He's died. He's resurrected. And he's still living today.

He's in this room through the power of the Holy Spirit. He's right here with us today. Don't be afraid. Thank you.