

Pastor Mark R Jacobson † Easter 2 Sermon † April 24, 2022

⁴John, *To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne,...* ⁹I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, ¹¹which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." ¹²I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. ¹⁷When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. – Revelation 1:4, 9-18

The Risen Lord Helps Us So Nothing Hinders Us

Generally speaking, it's good to show some restraint. Two donuts, you're fine. Three donuts and someone might imply you're a pig. Restraint is also good with our words and actions. You don't always have to have the last word. Sometimes the best answer is no answer. You don't always have to do what other people are doing either. Like mama always says, if all your friends jump off a bridge, would you?

Generally speaking, it's good to show some restraint. Specifically speaking, though, about our Christian life in view of the empty tomb and risen Savior, there are no restraints. The restraint of sin has been forgiven. The restraint of death has been conquered. Without restraint Jesus' commission is, "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching." Without restraint Jesus' will for his disciples is, "... be my witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." In the locked room (*John 20*) fear and doubt restrained the disciples. In the book of Acts (*chapter 4*) the disciples lived without restraint. The jail doors of the high priest and Sadducees did not restrain them. Neither did their strict order not to teach in this name.

1. Jesus is with us and we have that in writing.

Half a century later all of these apostles except one had made their way to Jesus in heaven. They were executed because of the word of God and their testimony of Jesus. The Apostle John was not executed for his faith, but he was exiled. The emperor's name was Domitian, and he had made Christianity an illegal religion. He wanted to restrain the Apostle John and the New Testament church, but John would not be restrained. We have evidence of John's freedom in our text. It says in verse 10, "On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit." The Lord's Day is Sunday and "in the Spirit" means not out to lunch. It's okay to be out to lunch if you are out to lunch, but when it's the Lord's Day and you are in worship, it's good to be in the Spirit by asking yourself, "What is God saying to me in His Word? How does God want me to live? That is being in the Spirit. And John would certainly be wondering how he could help the seven congregations in Asia when he was exiled away from them on the island of Patmos.

It was at this time when John was in the Spirit that he received a revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ. In that vision the command came from the Lord, "Write!" "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philly and Laodicea." It's good to have things written down. That's true if you are trying to make a one stop shopping trip to the grocery store or if you need to prove the car you are drying is yours. The same is true for living an unhindered Christian life. In his Gospel the Apostle John wrote of his writing, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name."

What a treasure the written Word of God is! We all go to work for treasure. We put our financial treasure in the bank for safe keeping and interest earning. We are careful to neither hoard nor waste our treasure. We want to make the most of our treasure. What about the treasure that is the word of God? Are you reading what is written? Are you working to read the treasure of God's Word every day? Are you putting the treasure of the written Word of God into the bank of your heart so that you might live unhindered Christian lives? Let's read what was written to help us live this way. Starting with verse 12. ¹²I turned around to see the voice that was

speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

Are you all still in your seat? I'm still standing, but when the Apostle John saw Jesus he was neither standing nor sitting. Verse 17, *"When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead."* John was in the Spirit. John was not out to lunch, but even while John was in the Spirit, John was still in his sins, and John could neither stand nor sit in the presence of a holy God. Those blazing eyes see everything. All those sins we have successfully hidden from each other to this point are not hidden to Jesus. Jesus knows the websites you are checking out when no one is around. Jesus knows how you talk and behave when you are with your friends, even if your parents don't. Jesus knows when you are loving your neighbor as yourself for real and when you are faking it. All your sins are clear as day to him and those blazing eyes, and there wouldn't be any difficulty for him to take one of his bronze, furnace glowing feet and crush you like a cigarette. In his grace and mercy, though, Jesus, does not use his power to harm us, but to help us. What Jesus says next is a repeated refrain on the sacred pages of Holy Scripture: *"Do not be afraid."* *"Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."* These words for us are practically the same as Jesus words to his apostles surrounding his great commission. *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"...* *"And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age."* (Matthew 28). Brothers and sisters, Jesus is with us and we have that in writing, so read it and as you do the Lord will help you so nothing hinders you. You will be living your Christian life unhindered, without restraint.

2. Jesus is holding in his hand those who hold us.

And not only will you live your Christian life unhindered, but you can also help other Christians live that way, too. There were many concerns in those 7 churches on the province of Asia. And this is what John saw concerning those congregations. Verses 12 and 13 say, *"I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man."* Verse 16, *"In his right hand he held seven stars."* Later in verse 20 (not in our reading) it clearly says, *"The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."*

There was important stuff going on in those congregations. John's exile was a big deal. Other things were going on, too, both good and bad, and you can read about it in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation. Important stuff is going on at your congregation, too, both good and bad. We will get into some of it at our congregational meeting at noon. I imagine much of the conversation will center around hindrances and restraints. It will be said, "We need more people at these meetings" and the debate will be, "We need more of this or that or the other thing," and, "We need to be happy with the 'this', that, and other thing we already have." The voters' will decide, and as long as we are in the spirit and not out to lunch, we as a congregation will follow the will of the voters, because the outcome of any vote doesn't matter nearly as much as the truth that Jesus is holding in his hand those who hold us. Jesus is holding the pastors who hold the congregation. Jesus is holding the parents who hold their children. Jesus is holding our congregational Chairman who holds our Church Council. Jesus is holding the Chairman of our many different Boards who hold the members on their Board and their ministries. And Jesus is holding our Federation High School and Lutheran Elementary and Sunday School Teachers who hold the teenagers and children. All of us were literally and spiritually held by others at some point in our lives.

At this point, today, you may be holding onto to others. Keep in mind what the Apostle John said of himself. He said in verse 9, *"I John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus."* *"Your brother and companion,"* he says. Not, "Your apostle and superior." They all were going through the same kind of suffering. They were all saved by and serving others with the same gospel. And as long as they patiently endured on this earth they would have problems and promises. The Bible says, *"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14). Jesus also promises the church will always endure and the gates of hell will not overcome it (Matthew 16). Amen.