

“What Does Jesus Look like to You?”—Revelation 1:12-16

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “What Does Jesus Look like to You?”, is Revelation 1:12-16 → *Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around His chest. The hairs of His head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the roar of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and His face was like the sun shining in full strength.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

What does Jesus look like to you? Based upon paintings displayed on the walls of Christian homes the picture of Jesus in many a mind could be a man wearing a robe with a beard and long flowing hair, appearing as if He just returned from a beauty salon. Whether He is depicted on a crucifix, in various paintings or in movies, generally these

characteristics identify Him as Jesus (sometimes with the exception of the nicely styled hair). While such depictions reveal the man Jesus according to His human nature in various contexts, the real challenge is how to depict Him according to His divine nature as well, since He is also true God.

The difficulty of describing the indescribable calls for the use of anthropomorphism—using human pictures and concepts in order to reveal divine truths and mysteries. An example of God revealing Himself and His Will to human beings using anthropomorphism is what we read in our text before us.

The apostle John, very probably the oldest and last of the living disciples of the Twelve, had been exiled to an *island called Patmos* as persecution for preaching *the word of God and the testimony of Jesus* (cf. John 1:9). There Jesus appeared to him, speaking to him and looking rather “strange.” In fact, as he *turned to see the voice that was speaking to him*, the vision was so overwhelming that he *fell at His feet as though dead* (cf. Revelation 1:17). Fear, awe and a sense of unworthiness always accompanies the revealing of the glory of God in some fashion (cf. Judges 13:22; Isaiah 6:1-5; Luke 5:8). Let’s see what the text says Jesus “looked like.”

He was *clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around His chest*. It pictures the clothing worn by the high priest of Yahweh in the Old Testament. Just as he entered the Most Holy Place in the Temple

once a year to offer a lamb on the Day of Atonement for the sins of the whole nation of Israel, so Jesus *entered . . . heaven itself* to offer Himself once as *a lamb without blemish or spot for the sin of the world*. He continues to live as your great High Priest to constantly *appear in the presence of God on your behalf* (cf. Hebrews 9:24; 1 Peter 1:19; John 1:29).

Verse 14 of our text continues: *The hairs of His head were white, like white wool, like snow*. In Scripture gray or white hair represented wisdom which should accompany old age (cf. Leviticus 19:32). It is also a way of describing the divine nature of Christ as it connects us to the description of Yahweh as *the Ancient of Days* in the vision of Daniel (cf. Daniel 7:9) some 650 years earlier. Notice *His eyes were like a flame of fire*. It pictures the penetrating insight of His omniscience into the hearts and minds of people (cf. John 2:24-25; Matthew 9:4; 12:25; Luke 2:35). Such an image is even carried over in modern media which uses glowing eyes as a special effect to depict a penetrating affect on the mind.

Verse 15 of our text says, *His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the roar of many waters*. While it is difficult to find some meaning behind these descriptions, once again they remind us of Daniel's vision of God (cf. Daniel 10:5-6). They reinforce the divine nature of Jesus Who is described by John in verse 13 of our text as *one like a son of man*. This was a title which Jesus used for Himself quite often during His earthly ministry, which was His

time of humiliation, leading to His death as a human being so we can be forgiven of our sins and live forever. These descriptions stress that He is true God and true man, *the living One Who died, and is alive forevermore* (cf. Revelation 1:18). In *His face that was like the sun shining in full strength* we experience *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:6; John 1:14).

If you want to know what Jesus “looks like” you look to His presence and His work in your life. Verse 12 describes Christ’s Church, referring to it as *seven golden lampstands* (cf. Revelation 1:20). It also describes Jesus *in the midst of the lampstands*, that is, constantly present with His Church. In Matthew 18:20 Jesus described His presence amongst gathered believers, saying, *where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them*. As the Church does its work of baptizing and teaching the Gospel, Jesus promised, *I am with you always, to the end of the age* (cf. Matthew 28:20).

His omnipresence also sustains you and upholds you in the faith. This picture is given in verse 16 where it says *in His **right hand** He held seven stars*. The *seven stars* are explained later in this chapter as *the angels of the seven churches* (cf. Revelation 1:20). According to Hebrews 1:14 angels are *all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation*. In other words, they are sent by Jesus to guard and protect His Church. The fact that Jesus held these seven

stars ***in His right hand*** means that He is actively protecting and caring for His people in His divine power “at the right hand of God the Father Almighty” (cf. Apostles’ Creed).

This overwhelming vision along with the message which the Church received in the Revelation, provides great comfort for believers in Christ. While many of John’s fellow brothers and sisters in Christ (i.e. the Church) were being murdered for their faith in Jesus, the devil used such persecution an effort to gain a foothold for unbelief. Any time you go through suffering for doing the right thing, the temptation lurks to give up continuing to do the right thing because it doesn’t “pay off” in the end. Satan is constantly looking for circumstances where he strives to gain a foothold in your life in an effort to lead you away from Christ and into doubt, unbelief, hopelessness and despair. Persecution provides the perfect circumstance for such temptation.

However, Jesus is Lord! He continues to live victorious through the His Word—His Law which condemns you as a sinner and His Gospel which gives you forgiveness of your sins. This Word is pictured in verse 16 of our text as *a sharp two-edged sword coming from His mouth*. The Holy Spirit works through the Gospel which you—His Church—continue to proclaim in a messed-up world living in the darkness of sin. Through *the word of God which is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword . . . discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart* (cf. Hebrews

4:12), the Holy Spirit creates faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

When describing our spiritual battles and how to protect ourselves in the midst of temptation, Ephesians 6:17 describes *the sword of the Spirit as the word of God*, a part of *the whole armor of God*. It is that Word which the Church holds out *in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation*, shining *as lights in the world* (i.e. the description of the Church as *seven golden lampstands*), while *holding fast to the word of life* (cf. Philippians 2:15-16; Matthew 5:16). We persevere in this confession of faith in Jesus because He lives victorious over the power of the devil, sin and death even though we still struggle with their presence each day. Thus, the message of Revelation to the Church still stands for you today: Though it appears that the devil is winning the battle, Jesus has won the war.

Jesus “looks like” the risen Victor over sin and death, crushing the devil’s power (cf. Genesis 3:15) for eternity. He lives and reigns today for you! There is an Easter hymn which confesses these truths in our life today. Open your hymnal to hymn 461. In these verses you confess the comfort you receive **today** because your Redeemer lives.

Verses 1-2 talk about His living all glorious and triumphant from the grave. Verses 7-8 talk about His bringing us into this glorious and triumphant life in eternity. Notice why He lives according to verses 3-6:

He lives to . . . bless us with His love . . . plead for us above . . . feed our hungry souls with His Word and body and blood . . . help us in time of need . . . grant us rich supply . . . guide us with His eye . . . comfort us when faint . . . hear our soul's complaint . . . silence all our fears . . . wipe away our tears . . . calm our troubled hearts . . . impart His blessings to us . . . be our kind, wise, heav'nly friend . . . love us to the end . . . and simply grant us daily breath. That's what He does right now for you. That's what Jesus "looks like" in your life **today**. Amen.

P Christ is risen!

C He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

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