

John

Heroes: Amazing Stories of Faith

Revelation 1:9-19

October 15, 2017

Welcome again to worship. It's great to be together.

We are continuing our series Heroes and their amazing stories of faith. I've really enjoyed this series because I like stories with heroes. I love movies with heroic stars like John Wayne, Harrison Ford, and Cary Grant. One of my favorite Cary Grant movies is "Father Goose." Remember that one? He's somewhat of an anti-hero in the beginning of the movie, but becomes a coast watcher during the Second World War and a hero when he saves a woman and some young girls. Of course, it could have been that when I first saw it, I was maybe around 9 years old, and as a pre-pubescent boy, I laughed hysterically when Grant said the line, "Frank, kiss my foot Frank." Pre-pubescent boys love that stuff.

So, I'm a big fan of heroes, and we have been talked about some incredible heroes from the Bible and how we can be heroes in our own right as we live out our own amazing story of faith. So far, we've talked about David, Hannah, Paul, Moses, and Joseph. Today, we are going to talk about John the disciple. Turn to page 6 in your bulletin so that you can take notes.

Let's do a little background on John. He was one of Jesus' twelve disciples. He was probably the youngest of them all. He and his brother James were once fisherman, who, along with Peter, were considered the inner circle. They saw Jarius' daughter raised from dead, they witnessed the Transfiguration, they were closest to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Only John was at the crucifixion scene, and it was he and Peter who ran to the tomb when they heard that it was empty. These two also were the ones that healed the crippled man at the Temple in Acts 3.

John had followed Jesus for 3 years, then seen the birth of the Church. He also had outlived all the other disciples. His own brother was the first disciple to be martyred. The rest as well, spread out and killed. Peter was crucified upside down in Rome. Peter's brother Andrew was crucified in Greece. Thomas was martyred in India. John finds himself exiled on the Island of Patmos, a small island in the Aegean Sea off the coast of modern day Turkey. It was there that we pick up our Scripture passage from Revelation 1:9-19.

READ REVELATION 1:9-19.

Pretty scary passage, isn't it. It is the beginning of a somewhat scary book, the book of Revelation. It says that John was in worship on the Lord's day. He was in worship; not specifically in church, but you get what I mean. He was worshipping on Sunday, just like us.

Now, most people come to church, and they know what to expect. They really don't like surprises, no frightening experiences. We like our church routine.

I remember hearing a pastor say that before each Sunday worship, he would pray, "Lord, let something happen today that is not in the bulletin." He wanted the Spirit to move in the midst of worship.

Occasionally, something does happen that's not in the bulletin.

FIRST CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP AT ANDERSON HILLS.

We remember those Sundays when something special happened, but let's be honest: we don't want them every day.

So imagine John's surprise. He's in worship on Sunday, he's just bowing his head and praying with his eyes closed... and all of a sudden, he hears behind him a loud voice like a trumpet. I mean, it's really loud, and it says:

VOICE FROM THE BOOTH: PAY ATTENTION AND TAKE NOTES.

And if that wasn't scary enough, he turns around, and what does he see? Verses 12-17:

... seven golden lampstands, and 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. His head and hair were white like wool, as 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. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.¹

No kidding. You know the phrase, "Scared me to death." It came from here. John heard this really loud noise, and when he turned around, he saw a scene that nearly scared him to death. It was the glorified Lord, Jesus, the same one he had followed all those years ago.

Look what happens next in verse 17-19:

... Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later."²

And what John writes down becomes the Book of Revelation.

My Sunday School class has been studying the Book of Revelation... for 34 months. The commentary I've been writing for the class I think will end at 616 pages. The introduction was longer than the actual book itself. To say that we have dug deep into Revelation is putting it mildly.

So, when thinking about John as a hero, I couldn't help but think about this scary moment on the Island of Patmos and his vision of the Revelation.

And I want you to write this down in your bulletin:

VOICE FROM THE BOOTH: JOHN DEPENDED ON GOD AND PROMISE OF VICTORY.

Now, the Book of Revelation is not something people normally rush to study. As I have studied it these past few years, I've realized that John's Revelation tells us 6 things about what will, as Jesus says to him in verse 19, what will take place.³ I'd like for you to write these 6 things down.

First, John's Revelation tells us about the increase of evil and heresy.

Over and over again in Revelation, as well as the rest of the New Testament, we are told that in the end times, the world will be filled with evil and sin. It is as if Satan knows he only has a short time left, and so he puts his work into overdrive to deceive and destroy and turn as many as he can away from God.

¹ Revelation 1:12-17a (NIV)

² Revelation 1:17b-19 (NIV)

³ Points 2-6 come from Life Application Study Bible, Megathemes of Revelation

Aren't we seeing that today? Sometimes, you look at the news and you wonder, "Could it get any worse?" And you marvel at the fact that the norms of society are so far removed from the call to holiness in Scripture that one might wonder if anyone ever knew anything about the Ten Commandments. Oh, yeah, those are outlawed. And so is prayer, along with the biblical standard for marriage, treatment of orphans and widows. I mean, we are throwing out everything in the Bible, even the most basic and beginning realities. Genesis 1 reads:

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*⁴

Not anymore. We aren't either male or female. I think there are now somewhere between 6 and 12 gender designations. I mean, it's crazy out there. The truth, as Romans 1 says, is being exchanged for a lie.⁵ Am I right?

And it's not just in the world; it's in the church as well. We have 2 Bishops of the United Methodist Church blatantly teaching heresy. A Bishop in the Western Jurisdiction is teaching that Jesus was a bigot and prejudiced and should not be worshipped, and a retired Bishop – originally a pastor in our own Conference – says that he cannot believe the truth of the resurrection.

The world is full of evil and heresy. John said it would be so at the end times.

Folks, you'd better believe that we are in the end times. Despite the ridiculous claims by somebody that the Apocalypse was going to come September 24 or sometime this month or whatever he said, he was wrong to assign a date, but he was not wrong in saying that we are in the end times. Don't you assume that because he was wrong with a date that he is wrong otherwise. These are the last days, and you and I need to be prepared.

Second, John's Revelation tells us about God's sovereignty.

Despite what seems to be evidence to the contrary, God is sovereign. He is greater than any power in the universe; greater than sin, lies, deception, and heresy. God is not to be compared with any leader, government, or religion. He controls history for the purpose of uniting true believers in loving fellowship with Him.

Though Satan's power may temporarily increase, we are not to be led astray. God is all-powerful. He is in control. He is allowing this time to bring his true family safely into eternal life. Because He cares for us, we can trust Him with our very life.

One of my first sermon series after coming to Germantown was called "Big. Big! Big!!" We talked about how big God is. I have never repeated a sermon series in a church, but I might need to, so that we can be reminded that in the midst of the world today, we can still trust God's sovereignty.

Third, John's Revelation tells us about Christ's return.

Christ came to earth as a "Lamb," the symbol of His perfect sacrifice for our sin. But Revelation teaches us that He will return as the triumphant "Lion," the rightful ruler and conqueror. He will defeat Satan, settle accounts with all those who reject Him, and bring His faithful people into eternity.

When Christ returns, it will be clear and obvious. We will not be uncertain, like at the time of His birth. It will be the biggest news all over the world, and you and I need to be ready. For those who have their hope and faith in Christ and Christ alone for

⁴ Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

⁵ See Romans 1:25

salvation will be saved, and we do not know the day or the hour when He will return, so you had better be sure today that your name is written in the Lamb's book of life.

So, no matter what you are going through now, you can know that Christ is returning, and soon I believe. And the assurance of Christ's return gives suffering Christians the strength to endure. We can look forward to His return as king and judge. Since no one knows the time when He will appear, we must be ready at all times by keeping our faith strong.

Fourth, John's Revelation tells us about God's faithful people.

John wrote to 7 churches in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. Remember the loud voice? It said:

"Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."⁶

John wrote Revelation to encourage the church to resist the demands to worship the Roman emperor. He warns all God's faithful people to be devoted only to Christ. Revelation identifies who the faithful people are and what they should be doing until Christ returns.

So, no matter the evil we see today, no matter the persecution we face for standing up for the truth, no matter what happens to our bodies, Revelation is clear that we will find our place in the new heaven and the new earth, in the new Jerusalem.

You can take your place in the ranks of God's faithful people by believing in Christ. Victory is sure for those who resist temptation and make loyalty to Christ their top priority.

Fifth, John's Revelation tells us about judgment.

One day, God's anger toward sin will be fully and completely unleashed. All this stuff we are seeing today, God's anger is growing, and I don't want to be the focus of God's anger. No, Satan will be defeated with all of his agents: demons. And yes folks, there are demons, and I believe there are demon possessed people in our world today. False religion will be destroyed. God will reward the faithful with eternal life, but all who refuse to believe in Him will face eternal punishment. There is a lake of fire, and all those against God will be thrown there and be tormented day and night forever.

So my friends, evil and injustice will not prevail forever. God's final judgment will put an end to these. We need to be certain of our commitment to Jesus if we want to escape this great final judgment. No one who rejects Christ will escape God's punishment.

Finally, John's Revelation tells us about hope.

One day, God will create a new heaven and a new earth. All believers will live with Him forever in perfect peace and security. Those who have already died will be raised to life. These promises for the future bring us hope.

And that hope is this: that what Christ promises will come true. When we have confidence in our final destination, we can follow Christ with unwavering dedication no matter what we must face. We can be encouraged by hoping in Christ's return.

My friends, this world is being turned upside down.

Where will you put your trust?

⁶ Revelation 1:11 (NIV)