

Revelation 1:4b-8

Today is the **last** Sunday of the church year in the Christian calendar - Christ the **King** Sunday. Another year of God's grace is coming to an end - another year of opportunities to **enrich** our faith, and to **serve** our Lord is reaching a **conclusion**. The end of the church year reminds us of a couple of sobering truths. First of all, there will be an **end** to each of our **lives**. And second, there will be an end to **everything**. On the Last Day our entire **universe** will be completely **destroyed**. So, how should we **close out** our church year? When we think about our gracious **God** - and the gift of His **Son** - and His eternal **rule** - and His promise to **come again** to bring us into His glory - there's only **one word** which says it **all**, and that's **Amen**. We use **Amen** to mark the end of our **prayers**, the end of a **sermon**, and the end of a **worship service**. **Amen** is a word of **faith** - a word which literally means: this is **true**. So in our worship service today, we're going to say **Amen To The Church Year**.

We'll start out today by taking a look at our **God**. Our God is a **great** God - a God who deserves our **praise** forever. We can certainly say **Amen** to that. Just think about how God **greet**s us in the opening words of John's letter to the seven churches, which serves as our **text** for today. He wrote, "*Grace to you and peace from him who **is**, who **was**, and who is **coming**, and from the **seven spirits** that are before his throne, and from **Jesus Christ**, the faithful **witness**, the firstborn from the **dead**, and the ruler of the **kings** of the earth.*" Grace and peace. **Grace** is God's attitude of **favor** and **kindness** to us - a blessing that we sinners did **nothing** to **deserve**. In His **grace** God had His Son become **poor**, so we could be made **rich** through the **forgiveness** of our sins. In His **grace** God gave us the gift of the **Holy Spirit**, who would enable us to **believe** in Jesus, and to have **eternal life**. And **peace** is the condition in our hearts that **results** from God's grace. As Paul told the Romans, "*Since we have been **justified** by faith, we have **peace** with God.*"

This grace and peace come from the **Triune God** - and all three **persons** of the godhead are **described** here. First of all there is God the **Father** - "*from Him who **is**. who **was**, and who is **coming**.*" God the Father **is** our ever present help in trouble. Even before He created the world God the Father **was** - He has **existed** from all eternity. And God the Father will visit this world **once more** on the Last Day. Next there is the **Holy Spirit**. John describes Him as, "*the seven spirits that are before his throne.*" Why **seven** spirits? That comes directly from the prophecy of **Isaiah**, where the Holy Spirit is described in this seven-fold way, "*The Spirit of the **LORD** will rest on Him - the Spirit of **wisdom** and of **understanding**, the Spirit*

of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” And finally there is God the **Son**. John continues, *“and from **Jesus Christ**, the faithful **witness**, the firstborn from the **dead**, and the ruler of the **kings** of the earth.”* Jesus is the faithful **witness**. He testifies to the **truth** that *“The Son of man was lifted up on the cross so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”* Jesus is the firstborn from the **dead**. He joined Himself to our humanity **completely**, so He even experienced **death**. But after He suffered the **punishment** for the sins of the world, and even endured the tortures of **hell itself**, He **rose** again from the dead. His resurrection **proved** that His death had **paid** for the sins of the world, and that He had **smashed** the power of death. Jesus is the **Lord** of life and death, and He guarantees to all who **believe** in Him that **they too** will **live** for all eternity. Jesus is the **ruler** of the kings of the earth. He is **above** all earthly powers.

Then John bursts out with **praise** for Jesus as he writes, *“To him who loves us and has **freed** us from our sins by his own **blood** and made us a **kingdom** and **priests** to God his Father - to him be the **glory** and the **power** forever. **Amen.**”* Jesus has made us to be a **kingdom** and **priests** to serve His God and Father. That’s an **unusual** combination - kings **and** priests. We find it in the Old Testament in a man named **Melchizedek**, who was both **King** of Salem, and **Priest** of the Most High God - and we also find it **again** in the first letter of **Peter** where he says, *“You are a chosen people, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may **declare the praises** of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”*

In that passage, Peter also shows us **why** God has made us both **kings** and **priests** - that we may declare the praises of our **God** with lives of **service**. Although we continue to be sinful human beings, because of **Jesus** we are **better** than we were before - **infinitely** better. **That** fact should bring us comfort **too** - **especially** when we’re feeling **depressed** or **down** on ourselves. Because of **Jesus**, we have **no reason** to have a **low** opinion of ourselves. Jesus has made us **kingly priests**, or **priestly kings**. We can live **sacrificial** lives of repentance, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving for our Lord; and at the same time we can live **apart from** the common **rabble** of this world. Our lives can be **positive** and **confident**, even in the face of **extreme** hardship. We can do what is **good**, rather than what is **bad** - we can choose to be **happy** rather than **sad** - we can overcome **pain**, and **sorrow**, and even **death** itself - we can do **all things** in this life through **Christ**, who gives us **strength**.

As John expresses his **personal** belief in the greatness of Jesus, he concludes his praise with the word "**Amen**" - this is **true**. And we can chime in together **with** John. Jesus is **truly worthy** of our honor and praise. He **loves** us - He has **freed** us from our sins by His own **blood** - and He has made us a **kingdom** and **priests**. When we consider that our sins had **chained** us to **Satan**, and that because of them we were doomed to be imprisoned in **hell**, it's more than **obvious** that Jesus **deserves** our **praise** for **freeing** us from those sins. Jesus is our **King**. He didn't send someone **else** to do the dirty work, but our King did it **Himself**. Jesus wrestled with the devil, and gave up His **life** to **free** us from our sins. "*To him be the glory and the power forever. Amen.*" There it is **again**. It's **true** that Jesus **deserves** all **glory** and **power**. May everything we **do** be for His glory - all our eating and drinking - all our working and playing.

And finally John writes, "*Look, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him, including those who pierced him. And all the nations of the earth will mourn because of him. Yes. Amen.*" The Bible promises that Jesus will **return** to this world at the end of time. He will appear **visibly** - with a multitude of **angels** surrounding Him as He sits on His kingly **throne**. Every eye will **see** Him - including even those Roman soldiers who **mocked** Him, and **beat** Him, and nailed Him to the **cross**. All the people of the earth will **mourn** because of Him - that is, all the **earthly** people, those who live for this **world** and the **things** of this world.

But **not everyone** will mourn when Jesus returns. **Believers** will **rejoice**. Consider the man in the Old Testament named **Job**. He longed for the day when he would see his Savior. Job said, "*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the end of time he will stand over the dust. Then, even after my skin has been destroyed, nevertheless, in my own flesh I will see God. I myself will see him. My own eyes will see him, and not as a stranger.*" And like **Job**, **all** those who have put their trust in Jesus, and who have made Him their dearest treasure will **rejoice** on the Last Day. At the present time we live by **faith**, so we can only **imagine** the **beauty**, and the **glory**, and the **majesty** of Christ's rule in heaven. But we are **excited** for that Day to come, when we will see our God without a **filter** - we'll see Him as He is - and best of all we will be **like** Him, perfect and holy, as we were **meant** to be from the beginning.

We can be absolutely **certain** that Jesus will return again on the Last Day, because He is the **faithful** witness. What He has revealed to us in His Word is **true**. And so we close this church year with the word - **Amen** - knowing that the **praise** which we gave to our LORD **today** is not the **end** - it's just the **beginning**, because

our praise will **continue on**, and we will glorify our God **forever** in heaven. This is **true. Amen.**