

**Reflection April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025: 'Revelation 1:1-8 & John 20:19-31'**

Revelation stands with Job and a few of the earlier books in the Old Testament that many people like to gloss over because most people only see the difficulties they place in our psyche. They create images that are often uncomfortable for us to feel, imagine, or even explore. Peace, hope, love, and grace create the depth of my thoughts today as each offer insights that are both timeless and deeply relevant. As I reflected on these passages, I wanted to consider how these divine truths can shape our understanding of God, ourselves, and our relationships with others.

In both New Testament readings, we encounter a really deep meaningful message that is the building blocks of peace, hope, love and grace with our faith. Both passages shine the light on the core of what we as Christians wholeheartedly believe; that the resurrection of Jesus and God's everlasting promise to humanity, that through Christ's death and resurrection, we can also know life in God's Kingdom after death. Our earthly death is just the beginning of our eternal life. This hope offers us a very rich landscape for us to reflect on for our entire earthly lives. Believing this was something the first Easter people needed considering what they had just lived through, witnessed and were now in the land of wondering 'What do we do next?' Do we continue with what Jesus had started with us, or do we walk away? These questions don't just belong to the first Easter people, they also belong to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The thoughts of peace, hope, love, and grace which exist in both of our texts today are insights that are both timeless and deeply relevant. As we reflect on these passages, I invite you to consider how these divine truths can shape your understanding of God, yourselves, and your relationships with others.

Revelation begins with a salutation from John to the churches in Asia, where John introduces us to his central ideas of grace and peace. The greeting "grace and peace" is not just a formal entry; it sets the tone for the entire book of Revelation, emphasising that these blessings come from God – the One who is eternal. This acknowledgment of God as "Him who is and who was and who is to come" is an instant reminder of God's sovereignty across time, reassuring us that God remains unchanging amidst the tumultuous events of life. Any changes which take place are done by us. We change our minds, attitudes and behaviours, God doesn't. God is constant.

Through Revelation John shines the light on hope through the declaration that Jesus Christ is "the Alpha and the Omega." In referring to Jesus in this way, the text assures us that He is the beginning and the end, encompassing all existence. For those who are following in the footsteps of Christ, this provides hope that transcends our present sufferings and fears, reassuring us that God's plans prevail. In a world that often feels chaotic and unpredictable, this assurance is foundational, reminding us that our lives and experiences are enveloped in a divine narrative where God is the director.

God's love is evident in the imagery and language used throughout John's writing of Revelation. The assertion that Christ "loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood" tenderly captures the nature of divine love: sacrificial and transformative. This act of love not only initiates a relationship with God but also frees us to live out our lives defined by that love. As recipients of such grace, we are inspired to embody love in our interactions with others, extending God's generosity, kindness and compassion as we have received.

Moving from Revelation to John, we encounter the disciples grappling with fear and doubt after Jesus' crucifixion. Understandably so, they find themselves hiding, beside themselves with grief, one would be forgiven to say, overwhelmed by the loss of their teacher and friend. It is within this space of uncertainty that Jesus appears, bringing comforting and yet confronting words of peace. His greeting — "Peace be with you" carries transformative power, reminding the disciples and, by extension, all of us who believe with our whole being that His presence dispels fear and brings comfort. The peace that Jesus offers isn't merely the absence of conflict but a deep and abiding sense of wholeness and security in God's love.

The story of Thomas, who doubts the resurrection, affirms Christ's dynamics of grace and love. The struggle Thomas experiences serve as a mirror for many of us who experience uncertainty in our faith journeys. Yet, when Jesus invites Thomas to touch His wounds, it exemplifies how grace meets us in our doubts. Instead of chastising Thomas, Jesus offers him tangible evidence of love and hope. This invitation to move from doubt to belief is a remarkable testament to God's grace, highlighting that God does not shy away from our human struggles but rather meets us in them.

Thomas's eventual declaration, "My Lord and my God!" succinctly shows us the transformative power of encountering the risen Christ. It reinforces the message that genuine faith emerges through personal experience and realisation of God's love and grace. Here, we see that doubt can lead to a deeper understanding of faith when approached with openness and honesty.

Both passages culminate in a profound understanding that peace, hope, love, and grace coexist and interrelate. They invite us to embrace the gifts of peace, love, hope and grace not only for our benefit but also to share them with others. In a world filled with violence, dishonesty, chaos and uncertainty, the message of Revelation and John challenges us to be conduits of peace, to embody hope amidst despair, to demonstrate love in action, and to extend grace generously.

In reflection, as we navigate our own fears and doubts, may we remember that we have a God who invites us into a transformative relationship, reminding us that through Christ, we can find lasting peace, radiant hope, unconditional love, and unmerited grace. These divine gifts equip us not only to face our struggles but also to serve as beacons of light to those around us, embodying the very essence of the Gospel in our daily lives.

I finish with this thought, may the God of hope fill us all with joy, and peace as we trust in the risen Christ. So that we may be overflowing with hope, through faith and power of the Holy Spirit, and that love, faith, and hope, the greatest of these, may abide in our heart, leading to the everlasting peace found in God.

Amen