



Sunday, April 12th

Preacher: Pastor Howard-John Wesley

Sermon Title: 'Alive Forevermore'

Scripture: Revelation 1:17-18

When 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. I 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.

Sermon Summary:

Pastor Wesley opened this powerful sermon by providing context to the book of Revelation. The imagery of this letter is often misunderstood or misinterpreted. While some use this letter to predict the end of the world, it's primary purpose is to provide a message for those living in an uncertain world. John writes to an audience that has experienced life going from better to worse to worse. For the original audience of Revelation and for those of us living in a pandemic today we find out that the message of Easter for those who live in crisis is a call to focus our faith on:

1. God's presence, faithfulness, and authority
2. Human hope in Jesus' defeat of death
3. God's reign forevermore

Life Application Questions.

1. Pastor Wesley talks about how we've been able to see things go from bad to worse. Over the length of your life, what transitions have you seen and how has that impacted you today?
2. Pastor Wesley notes that one of the most consistent promises of God in the bible is that God is with us. What testimony do you have of that promise and how can you use that as encouragement now?
3. In the sermon text, Pastor Wesley points out that God says "I Am" three times. There are many characteristics of God that can complete the "I Am" statement. What three "I Am" statements are you in need of right now?
4. Every now and then, God takes "what is" and makes it "what was." What has God made past tense for you that is most relevant to you in this moment? What are you currently facing that you hope God will make past tense for you?

5. Jesus' resurrection is in itself a redefining of outcomes. Pastor Wesley taught that the conjunction makes all the difference. He died *but* He rose again vs. He died **and** He rose again. Did you have a deadening experience in your life that cries out for new life with a redefined outcome? Sit with it, find the conjunction in how you tell it to yourself first, then change it. Find the AND in it through prayer, arise and live again.

Spirit Work:

1. On a sheet of paper or in your journal, create two columns. Label one column Covid-19 or on any other fear you have. Label the other column Jesus Christ aka "I Am." In the first column, record all of the reasons why you have this fear. In the second column, record what Jesus Christ would say to that fear. Afterwards, reflect on:
 - a. how your faith in Jesus Christ has prepared you for this time in our history;
 - b. how you can grow closer to God during this time;
 - c. how you can share the hope of Christ during this time while practicing social distancing for others who are living in fear.
2. Pastor Wesley points out how God's presence with us is a consistent theme throughout the bible. Pick a scripture that emphasizes God's presence and meditate on that scripture for the week and then share that scripture with someone who may need a reminder of God's presence.
3. In pointing out that the Easter message is also about human hope, Pastor Wesley pointed out that in the original Greek, the word "kai" could be translated as "but" as well as "and." The conjunction "but" erases what was before it while the conjunction "and" adds to what was before it. In thinking about both translations of the word, reflect on times when you experienced both "but God" as well as "and God."