

What You Need to Know about the Future

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Bible Text: Revelation 10
Preached on: Sunday, July 23, 2017

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Pew Bibles. Revelation chapter 10. In Escondido, I'm currently preaching through the book of Revelation and I realized, again, reflecting this morning before I arrived here at the church, it's a little bit more of a challenge I've kind of built in Escondido to get to chapter 10. So if it's a little bit confusing at first, just stay awake, okay? Stay with me. And I think you'll see where it goes and by God's grace, hopefully it'll be clear to you. So Revelation chapter 10 this morning. This is the word of the Lord.

1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. 2 He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, 3 and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring. When he called out, the seven thunders sounded. 4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down." 5 And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven 6 and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, 7 but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets. 8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." 9 So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, "Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." 10 And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. 11 And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings."

And there ends the reading this morning of God's word.

Well, I know the perspective sometimes among Reformed people that Revelation has been so abused by people, so many different views, so much confusion about it that we approach it and we're a little bit nervous about it because it seems so scary and we're not quite sure what to do with it in light of all of the many interpretations and many ideas that have been presented with and regarding the book of Revelation. But it is indeed a very pastoral book. It's meant for Christians who are struggling in this present age with why things are the way that they are and why it doesn't seem like we're winning much of a victory, much of a battle, that we're winning at all. It seems actually that the church is quite defeated and small and everything else, the darkness, the realm of darkness, all the things against us are prevailing and winning. And Revelation's message is a very clear message and it is to say Jesus is going to win. Jesus has won. It's very encouraging to us that way.

It helps provide us with a perspective of what is happening in the world. You're not going to get that correctly on the news, CNN or Fox. It helps us to understand how the Lord is responding to all of the things that are happening in his own people's struggle on the earth. How he's helping them. How he's encouraging them. How he's strengthening them. How, if they could just pull back the veil and look, which is what Revelation is doing, they're going to see something very powerful. They're going to see him working. He's not disconnected. And it's giving us a perspective in light of how God is dealing with the world in the chapters that come previous to this, especially chapter 9. If you were to title that chapter, it is Jesus putting the world on notice, "Stop messing with my people." That's chapter 9. Three woes are described in chapter 9 against the world. You see that at the end of chapter 8, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants who dwell in the earth." That is a warning to the world in its collective opposition against the Lord and against his anointed and against his people. Woe. And two of those woes are described in chapter 9 that help us to understand how this world is going and that the world is not appreciating how this whole thing is being kept. In other words, I don't have time to get into all this, but locusts come out of, you'll notice there, out of the ground, these great locusts in chapter 9, a locust army. And the picture of chapter 9 is how the Lord is dealing with the world. When some great catastrophe happens, when something bad happens, the world always shoots out the lip, "Where was God in this?" Chapter 9 says, "No, no, no. What do you mean where was God? He's been holding all this stuff back a long time. He just lifted his hand of restraint and you're getting to taste a little bit what it's like in the darkness that you've chosen." Chapter 9 is about lifting the hand of restraint. He's holding this whole thing together. He's controlling all of this and he allows things in his providence to occur as judgments on the earth. Those are the horsemen riding through the earth. They're riding right now. They're bringing judgments on the earth. That's who's in control, you'll notice there. See, the Lord and these horsemen are riding and controlling the scales, economies and they're hitting things, as Jesus said, earthquakes and famines in various places. These things must come to pass.

Why I'm saying that to you is to say these previous chapters are giving us a perspective of how the Lord is dealing with a world in opposition to him, but this chapter is helping us understand how he is helping his people in the world. That's the beauty of Revelation chapter 10. And the question could go something like this: is God really able to keep his

little flock in the midst of all of this chaos? Look where it's going. Look at the hostility. Look at the rage. Look what they're trying to legislate against us now. Look where it's headed. Look at the hatred. We've had it so good in this country, we just haven't seen it like this and now it's starting to turn the way that it's turning and it's giving us perspective. The first century Christians dealt with Rome turning against them and persecuting them. It's the same thing. And they're in the middle of it. So Revelation 10 is an encouragement. God has the power to keep you in the midst of all of this. He is concerned about his people, his sheep, and their children, because you're concerned about your children, and Revelation 10 is saying to us, "I'm going to help you with letting you know what you need to know to make it through this and how I'm going to preserve my people, how I'm going to preserve my flock in the earth. So let me show you what you need to know so that you don't lose heart in the midst of all this in the struggle, that you don't lose heart in the midst of the struggle with sin in the kingdoms of the world as things grow hostile, as things happen that you can't understand." This is the chapter to go to that is meant to help you with that particular problem that we're all struggling with. So I think that means this is one of the most important chapters in the book, is it helps us to think about how to make it through the chaos and the things that are happening in this present time that we live.

So this is what he's saying, if you are taking notes, you might capture it this way, there are certain things that you'll never understand. There are certain things in life that you're not going to understand why things are going the way that they are going but you need to keep your eyes on what you do understand from the Scriptures of where this is all going in its ultimate goal, salvation, glory, hope, we'll get there. And then, of course, you need to understand the present struggle that you're in. If we don't understand what the struggle is going to be, you're not going to know how to process it. So he's telling you be careful not to overly read world events that are happening because you're going to be perplexed by them. Stay focused on what you have been told in the Scriptures and understand your present struggle.

The structure here is a little bit important, maybe more so than a little, to understand exactly what he's doing. This is Revelation's third cycle of seven cycles and in this third cycle, just like another cycle, the second cycle that dealt with the seal judgments, you have the judgments given, and then between the sixth and the seventh, you have a major section of encouragement to help the people of God who are struggling. For instance, in the seal judgments of chapter 6, as the seals were opened and the horsemen went out riding, when it comes to the sixth and seventh, he stops and in chapter 7, he gives a chapter of real encouragement to the sheep to say, "Before any of these judgments went out into the earth, I went out with a pen and I marked on the forehead all of my saints." That was taken from the book of Ezekiel, where the ink-man went out and he marked his servants encouraging the sheep that no matter what happens in the earth, you're already sealed. That's chapter 7. If I had time, I'd preach that to you, but I don't. It's a wonderful chapter. It's encouraging you with the doctrine of election. "I'm keeping my sheep. I'm not losing one of my sheep. They're all going to be there in glory." That's chapter 7.

Well, as we come to this third cycle, we have the same kind of structure where in chapter 10, he pauses here. You'll notice here between you have the fifth and sixth woe in chapter 9 and then he stops, and chapter 10 is this major section of encouragement again. And it functions as a sort of interlude to pause and to say, "Keep perspective in the midst of all this stuff that I'm describing about judgments on the earth. It's going to help you." And that's where we pick up this morning in chapter 10. Hopefully your Bibles are open, you can see this.

This is verse 1 of chapter 10, "Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring." It really is a glorious presentation of this strong angel. He really is awesome in power, boys and girls. He is awesome in glory. You'll notice the way he's described here. Beautiful. He's beautiful. He's wrapped in a cloud, rainbow, beautiful, glory. The emphasis, of course, on the legs here, that he takes one leg, and notice he's on fire. He's represented as having one foot on the sea and another foot on the land. The giant presentation of this angel, he is that big and that powerful. Roaring out like a lion, a message, powerful message. Where does this come from? A key to understanding Revelation is to understand that Revelation is borrowing from all the language of the Old Testament to describe realities for today. One of the particular places this comes from is at the sea when the children of Israel were coming out of Egypt and they were terrified by the armies of Pharaoh. Remember that? And remember what happened? The angel of the Lord showed up wrapped in a cloud, the spirit of glory, remember that, and his legs spread out as a canopy shielding them over Israel, walking them through the sea. The angel of God who was going before them, this is from Exodus, before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness, and it lit up the night. without one coming near the other all night. God said, remember what he said, "Don't be afraid, I'll fight the battle for you." All this is in the mind of Revelation, of John and the visions. It's working from Exodus, a lot of it.

So the imagery is complete protection in chapter 10 of you. That's the imagery. That's the encouragement of this particular chapter. Revelation is capturing for us the great spiritual and cosmic battle that is happening behind the scenes between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, things that are happening right now that we can't see with the naked eye. It's capturing it and it's telling you God is defending you. God is with you. We sing it, "God himself is with us. Let us now adore him." Powerful defense. Here's what happens. All of a sudden, he roars out like a lion, and seven thunders sounded. Seven thunders sounded and John, notice what he says, "I was about to write. I was about to write down what I saw." It was almost as if we've come to another cycle in Revelation John is ready to record. That's what Revelation is doing. Revelation is recording, telling us from the beginning of chapter 1 that it's revealing the things that are shortly to come to pass. So John was ready to write. Seven prophetic thunders of the future were just given. John says, "I saw everything that God was doing." This is the encouragement of this. It's

all planned. Nothing's happening by chance. All this is in his hands. He's in control of everything. We believe that in providence, don't we? Nothing's escaping him. The future is already mapped out, where it's going, the course of it, how it's going to go, what's going to happen. It's all there. Seven thunderous revelations. And this is really wonderful, for John sees it and says, "Time to write." John says, "As I was beginning to write, he stopped me." "Don't do it, don't write." As I was preparing this message and asking, you know, this is a really strange moment in the book of Revelation because it's meant to reveal you have seven thunderous revelations about things that are going to come to pass in this world that all of a sudden John is told not to record.

Why is that important? I think it's one of the most important messages of the book. What have we done to the book of Revelation? We've made it a code book, haven't we? Try to figure out the future. I mean, you can do some pretty stupid things and write some stupid things and make millions, by the way. Did you know that? Go to the Christian bookstore. Apocalyptic codes are everywhere. This is what we've done to the book of Revelation, and we've wrecked it. People are scared of it. I think to some degree for me, even as a Reformed pastor, I was a little scared to get into it because of what's been done to it. That's not fair. It's actually a pretty easy book. John just was told things and then told not to write. I've seen so much abuse of this. When I was in Linden, there was Harold Camping's son-in-law and the guy sold his business, put up signs everywhere, all throughout Linden, all the highways, "He's coming on such and such a date." You know, that was a sweeping phenomenon. You know how many people sold their businesses and did stuff and fell under that delusion? We're specifically told we don't know the times or the seasons that are put in the Father's authority. I haven't given that to you. See what Revelation is doing here? It's halting us on this book a little bit. He doesn't want us living by speculation of events, of things that are happening in the earth.

He was just told because God doesn't want us absorbed with worry and speculation about things that are happening and why they're happening the way that they're happening. You're not going to figure that stuff out. There are times you're not going to understand it. That's okay. That's okay. Some things happen in the world that are going to be so perplexing to us. Could you, if you were living in 1940, understand Hitler? There's things that are perplexing. There's things that are disillusioning. There's things that are confusing. There's things that are derailing. And you know what news is doing today? News's job is just to try to interpret all this and provide interpretation on it. That's what they sit and do. They analyze and they analyze, and they bring in every pundit under the sun to analyze and analyze and analyze and by the time you're done, nobody's made any sense. It's a path of despair. How much does the older generation say to us, "Oh, I can't believe how much this has changed." And from when I was a kid, it's already changed.

That has a derailing effect if we stay there. It's confusing. It's perplexing. You know what Jesus said to his disciples in Acts when they were starting the program of gospel ministry to the ends of the earth? What were they concerned about? "Are you now going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" "Listen, it is not for you to know times and seasons that the Father has put in his own authority. But you, go do this." I'll get there in a minute. It's really important. People become incredibly disillusioned in the midst of all this, and the

Lord's saying, "That's not where I want you." Endless speculation of why. Remember when Y2K happened, there were people storing up. "I don't want you doing it. You don't belong here. You're my people. I don't want you in fear." What are the survivalists going to do? We're going to die.

So this is where we are. So here's the message: patience. That's the message of the book of Revelation. Here is the message, the patience of the saints, and that's where then chapter 10 turns us. As it says, everything's planned, everything's happening the way that it should happen, events are unfolding that are not revealed to you, but in the next breath, he does something that should immensely encourage all of you here today and notice what he does. All of a sudden, the angel goes into oath stance. It's all very covenantal. You'll see this here in the first few verses as he breaks into oath stance, It's borrowed from the oath stance throughout the Scriptures of Genesis 15 and background. But he goes into oath stance and he begins to swear by the Lord. Now remember, the Lord has sent him down to do this to make something very clear for us. So this is the Lord communicating his oath. Hebrews talks about by two immutable things. It's impossible for God to lie. So what does he do? Notice it, "And the angel whom I saw standing," verse 5, "on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded," remember we're between the sixth and seventh, "by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets." He just said, "I want you to tell them something, John. I want you to tell them I have sworn and I will not ruin it. I've been saying things to my prophets through my prophets for many years, haven't I," things that are still being preached to us to this day. "I've promised things to you." Abraham understood that he didn't belong here. He wasn't looking for that land that he came out of. He was looking for a city whose builder and maker is God and then he was going there. That was promised to him so that when he looked out and he saw North, East, South, and West, he knew it was a heavenly kingdom rule and a heavenly place, the heavenly land that all that pointed to in glory, what Peter calls the new heavens and the new earth where righteousness shall dwell. "I have promised you a place of permanence. I have promised that all my people, every last one of them, will dwell with me forever in heavenly Jerusalem. I gave my Son for this. He died. He's risen. I'm not slow in giving you that promise." Remember Peter said that? "I'm not slow. I'm not slack. I have made a plan of salvation of good news to go out to the ends of the earth from the beginning through my Savior that when when he came and died and rose again and that that plan of salvation would go to the ends of the earth, and when the last of the elect come in, it's over. Righteousness and glory is secure. Here's what I want you thinking about then," he says. "There has already been a time appointed when there will be no more delay and the end will come. Nothing's stopping that. Nothing's stopping that. Not a thing."

The New Testament writers are constantly pushing us to the future. I'll be the first one to admit it's hard. I'm earthly. I think earthly. I have earthly desires. That's our struggle. But New Testament writers are pushing the people of God to the future. Here we have no lasting city. The United States is not our savior. And this is how Peter instructed

Christians, "Therefore," listen to this, "preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded." Listen to this imperative here. This is just wonderful, "Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus. That's where I want you thinking. That's where I want you focused. This time is appointed when it will be no more delay and it's all given to you." Paul said in Colossians, "There is hope laid up for you in heaven." Hebrews says, "By two unchangeable things in which it's impossible for God to lie, we have fled for refuge that we might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope that is set before us." This is driving us.

So what the Lord is doing for you is motivating you for the present to live in light of the future. "Think about this," that's what he's saying. "That's certain. I know you're not understanding all the chaos of this world and what's happening with the nations of the world. That's mine. But here's what's certain for you, you'll be there. You'll be there." Salvation's ready to be revealed. I think what he just gave us is wonderful. This is how we get through, it's reserved in heaven for you. That's what Peter says in 1 Peter 1. Heaven is reserved for you. You got the reservation. It's already made. Jesus is there. You're going to be there. You're already there in principle because he's there.

So with just one roar, he told you in Revelation, this big, scary book, right, that don't live in fear of what you are not sure about, God has not made those things known, but live in light of the hope that is secure for you. I love chapter 7 that gave us that perspective of the multitude that's already marked by God. Maybe this will help. I try to use things that we hold on to that are real, some things that we actually face in life that we know and struggle with and one of those being that in my own experience with my father who was recently diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and he had this Whipple procedure, and it's been horrible. Everything that could go wrong under the sun has gone wrong for my father and as of recent, we thought he had given up hope of living. We were worried about it. You have to have a reason to want to live, right? You don't have a reason to want to live, you give up hope. And as he's going through the doctor and into this top-notch surgeon down in Phoenix, it's interesting what happened a few weeks ago when he wasn't talking, there seemed to be no hope, he had given up, he's losing weight. He goes to the doctor, and the doctor looks at my mom's distressed, he and my mom, and he says, "You're right where you need to be." Huh? What do you mean I'm right where I need to be? "Oh, I'm just pleased with the progress." We're looking at it. Everything's gone wrong under the sun. "Yeah, yeah. In two weeks, all the tubes come out," which they have. "You're on your way." Do you know how much hope that gave him? That's his earthly hope now I'm talking about. Earthly hope gave him so much, it was like he came out of his shell. See what a good report from an earthly doctor will do? It'll really boost you. Now you've got a reason to live. Now you want a beer. Now you want to go out. You've got some encouragement, don't you?

Well, earthly hopes can die pretty quick, you know that. Who's giving you hope right now? Wow. Does that hope die? Here's the good news for you: it's reserved for you. It's going just according to plan, and you'll be there. Chapter 7 pictured all of God's saints. John saw you in chapter 7, all gathered around the throne with palm branches in their hands. He saw you in the future. You were there as a believer. Now, what should that

report do? It ought to boost you up a little bit, I guess it goes without saying. It motivates the present, doesn't it? The degree to which we have a certain hope, and hope's not wishful thinking in the Bible, hope is certain and sure and real, it's going to motivate the present.

So that's exactly what this chapter has done and so then it turns for a minute, and you can think of something like Revelation 12 where it says, "Rejoice in hope," and in the next breath, "Be patient in tribulation." Those things are juxtapositioned for a reason. That's how it's going to be and that's where the rest of chapter 10 is helping us with the present. Look at what it says, "Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, 'Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.' So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. And he said to me, 'Take and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.' And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. And I was told, 'You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.'"

The angel now describes for us the hardship in the present. Why is this so hard? Why? This scroll, notice what he says. John asks for the scroll now, not the thunderous revelations of the future, but the scroll. "Give me the scroll." And the angel says, "Here you go. Take it and eat it." What is that? It comes out of the book of Ezekiel, remember I said it borrows from the Old Testament, Revelation. Ezekiel 3. Listen to this, "And he said to me, 'Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.' So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. And he said to me, 'Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.' Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. And he said to me, 'Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them.'"

Here's what we have, we have the mission of the church in the present. This is what we're doing. This is happening right now. You have the mission of the church in this present struggle and an explanation of the source of all our hardships. This is so important. Where the trial, where the hardship being members of the kingdom of God, where the source of the hardship is, where is it? Well, John is told to take this scroll and eat it and digest it and it's going to have a twofold effect. It's going to be really sweet in the mouth and in the gut it's going to be really bitter, bad stomach. This is, you see, why when people say, "Well, I just read the book of Revelation literally," think about what you could come up with here. I asked my daughter at the table, my kids at the table the other night for devotions, I said, "Well, what do you think this could be, that it's sweet in the mouth and bitter to the stomach?" And she says, "Dad, I know, it's a burrito." See? It's California burritos. That's how they go. Eat it. What is sweet to your mouths and bitter to your stomachs? It's the single, deposit truth God's given you. It's his word. It's his word. You know this experience. It promises eternal life. It shows us a beautiful Savior. Its purpose is to announce to the inhabitants of the world the everlasting gospel. This word of God is handed to all of you. Think about it. You carry the scroll around. It's right here. You all get to eat and digest it as Christians.

A little book, but what happens? Well, this is what Ezekiel says happens, "the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me: because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart." Isn't that the struggle we're going through right now? Think about it. We proclaim the scroll, the word of God, we make known its answer. It is so wonderful. Oh, it's the most wonderful message to us and if you know that you are blessed, you know what you are, you know what you've done. And this word has given you the answer and man, that is sweet. Oh, it's so wonderful. It's gospel. It's a Savior. If we knew what hell was like, we'd love it all the more, right? What he saved us from, our sins. We proclaim it, but a sick feeling often comes into our stomachs over this ministry and struggle. It goes on in every church because here servants are like John, supposed to go out and proclaim to all tribes, tongues, peoples and nations. It's made it to loved ones, made it to Escondido. It's made it all over the face of the world. We proclaim it and we offer mercy and forgiveness and grace and help and strength. And we proclaim to you a Savior who will save you from all of your sins. What's the struggle in that? Well, you could use the words of the Old Testament, yet in spite of this word, Deuteronomy 1 and 2, you did not believe the Lord your God. John 8, "You cannot bear," Jesus said to people, "you cannot bear to hear my word." That's just heartbreaking, isn't it? A word of salvation that so many don't want to hear. The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, active, sharper, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. We are the aroma of Christ in this to those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To one, it's the fragrance of death to death. The other, it's the fragrance of life to life. Isn't it painful? You have loved ones who want nothing to do with this. I do. Maybe you have children right now who want nothing to do with this.

So sweet, so bitter. John is banished to the island of Patmos for what? The word of God, chapter 1, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Bitter. And I believe what the book of Revelation is doing is saying, "Don't lose heart in this struggle." We're here because God's patience means salvation. What's the typical response to the bitterness that we experience? We want to take away the offense of the word of God, don't we? We want to make it light and that there's nothing wrong and that everything's great and we don't deal with sin. That's what we want to do and then we remove the sweetness of the answer to us of it, Jesus. Why do you need him if nothing's wrong? The word of God is the source that brings down the heat on us. Look at it. Look at where all sinners, the struggle right now with agendas, it all has to center with what God's word has said. "Has God said," that was the beginning in Genesis 1. "Has God really said? No," said Satan. There it is.

But it's our purpose in being here. That's why we're gathered today. We're gathered around the word. It's the Great Commission to us. People are often concerned about all the wrong things, the music and this and that, it's the word. That's a means of grace. It's the Spirit's intention to advance this to every tribe, tongue, people and nation. So what Revelation is saying, it's worth the struggle. Don't give up on your children who don't believe. Don't give up praying for your mother and father who doesn't believe. Don't give up. That's why we're here. This is the purpose. This is why we're still here. It's not wonderful God gives us blessings in this life, but it's not just to build homes and live off

the fat of the land, is it? And so if we abandon this struggle, every church goes through this struggle. We tend to look over the fence and think it's greener somewhere else. Sorry. I've done it long enough to know that's not true. If you abandon the struggle, you abandon the word of God. That's what he's saying.

So before the seventh trumpet sounds, God wants us to stay committed to the word, even when there will be times of real hardship and suffering, that it is his word that is indeed above all earthly powers. You're listening about that right now. Above all earthly powers, Martin Luther would write about, and didn't he know that? God desires to say it through his gospel. So the message of today for you was you're not going to understand always the things that unfold in front of you. That's okay. But you do know where you're headed. You do know where you're going. Stay in that hope and then understand why the struggle is so hard in the present. It's going to help you. If you don't have any perspective of this struggle, you're going to be flopping everywhere. This is what it is, through much tribulation, we enter the kingdom of God. And he's told you, through it, keep your eyes on the prize that's set in front of you. Keep your eyes on the hope that's certain. Let that drive you. We are tasked to take the word to the nations and God says, "I promise you, I promise you, my word will never return void. It will accomplish the purposes for which I send it out." What a reason to continue and not lose heart here at your church, the amazing opportunities as I drive around here. Great opportunities. We should call out to the Lord and ask him to have good perspective through it.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your wonderful living and abiding word, sharper than any two-edged sword and what an encouragement the book of Revelation is to us in this struggle. Thank you for helping us to not lose heart in this, to keep our eyes fixed on the certainty of what Jesus has done and accomplished for us for this heavenly home and glory that is set apart and reserved for us in heaven. And in the present, we know it's not going to be easy. Nothing's easy in this life as is. We'll never create an easy life, no matter how hard we pursue it. But how wonderful it is, then, to have a perspective that as Christians, we get to go through this for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Give us confidence, strength, peace, help and encouragement and great joy in this for these are the words of life. Where else do we go? You, Lord, have the words of life, and that's why we're here today. Thank you for blessing us with your living and powerful word of gospel. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

A brief change to the bulletin this morning. We're going to rise at this time and sing number 444, stanza 1, 2 and 4 in the Blue Psalter hymnal. 444, "A mighty fortress is our God," 1, 2 and 4.