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## **What Jesus Says to Restless Hearts**

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**[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]**

If you're like me, you'll notice that many Christians in Canada are struggling to adapt to what feels like a secularizing culture. People seem to be tolerating less and less the message of Jesus, the claims of Christians, and Christians' ability to communicate those. We feel the pressure at work, we feel the pressure around our communities, maybe with our neighbours, or even around our dinner table. It seems very difficult to get the Christian message across, so that it's a positive thing. Light to the world, hope for people. And somehow Christians have shifted culturally from "the do-gooders" to, all of a sudden, "the do-badders." Sociologists have told us that this has been coming for a while. Post World War II Canada was actually a more explicitly Christian nation, politically, culturally, even in the media, than the States, our neighbours to the south, were less explicitly Christian. And now, today we would say that's totally shifted. And Christians in Canada are struggling with how to adapt at school, at work, and our community Facebook pages. We don't know exactly how to be faithful Christians. Do we share? Do we not share? Do we put the relationship on the line? Do we put our jobs on the line by talking about Jesus? The cool thing is, that I see, the good news, is that Jesus is still building his church. Despite the statistics that we hear about all the time about churches closing, we believe that Jesus today is building his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And the one thing that I see happening is that God is raising up faithful ambassadors to him, salt and light, in so many different spheres of culture. In politics, in law, in business, in education, and around communities of faithful people trying to love people the way Jesus loved them, and still speak truth into our culture, to preserve it. But nobody's free from discouragement. Everybody has their bad days. Everybody has times when they think, am I actually doing enough? Am I making any kind of influence? They pray prayers like, "God, where are you? Why don't you show up? Why don't you break through? You could, but you're not. And why?" Those are the people that I would like to speak to today, to those who have restless hearts. To those who are maybe afraid, saying, "What's going to happen next? What could they take away from us? What could they do to us if I speak, if I go public about being a Christian? If I take this opportunity?"

I'm going to talk within the framework of our summer sermon series called "Stranger Things." It's a TV show, which, as a white guy from the suburbs, I naturally feel uncomfortable talking about television. You know what I mean, right? You talk to a white person from the suburbs about TV, what do they say? They have to preface it every time: "I don't usually watch a lot of TV." Every single time someone wants to talk about TV from the suburbs, they say, "I don't watch a lot of TV. But..." And then they want to share about TV. "The little bit of TV that I watch, I don't watch a lot of it, but when I did watch,



the little bit of TV, I saw this one really interesting thing that you have to watch as well.” And they want to share about it, because it’s so interesting. *Stranger Things* is something people like to talk about. With a three year old and a one year old, I don’t have a lot of time these days, and I don’t watch a lot of TV. [Laughter] But if the sermon series was on *Daniel Tiger*, or *Sesame Street*, I could give you lots of good life lessons that we’ve been using to educate the next generation at the Morrison home. I talked to a friend about it, I said, “You know, I have to talk about *Stranger Things* and I haven’t really watched this show, I hear about it all the time, could you tell me a little bit?” He goes, “Oh John, you’ll love it! It’s all about our childhood from the 80s. The clothes, the technology, it’s right out of our childhood. It’s awesome. You’ll enjoy just that part of it.” I thought, oh, it’s all about our childhood. I could use this as a teachable moment with my kids. [Laughter] So when mom wasn’t around one day, [laughter] there we sat, the three year old, the one year old, and we opened up Netflix and put on *Stranger Things*. There was some yelling, there was some crying, tears that followed, and then there was running up into their room and hiding under the covers. [Laughter] I’m not sure how my kids dealt with it, that was just me. [Laughter]

We don’t need to talk about the TV show, we just need to talk about strange passages of the Bible, and anybody who’s ever read the Bible anywhere from Genesis to Revelation knows there’s plenty of material. I thought, why don’t we just take one of the strangest ones of them all, and look at the book of Revelation. Now that excites some people, and those are the ones that scare me when we talk about Revelation. Now you’re probably scared of those people too, which is why you’re uncomfortable with the book of Revelation. Many people just wish that it wasn’t in there. Like, why does this have to be an inspired book? It’s just so weird, there’s pictures, there’s ideas, scary things, confusing things. Numbers, symbols, what do they all mean? I’d rather not read it, and that’s the attitude of most people. And then the people that really love Revelation and want to talk about it all the time, and they want to talk about the people that talk about Revelation on TV, and they all just get together in a big weirdfest, and it just scares the rest of us. [Laughter] So we’re going to take Revelation back from the weirdos today, and we’re going to say, this is a book that is perfect for us today, those of us who struggle with questions like, what do we do when evil seems to be advancing and light isn’t penetrating the darkness? When God doesn’t seem to be showing up and we wonder, God, what are you doing? When you could be doing something, you seem to be doing nothing. Just one other thing too, is if you don’t know a weirdo, a Revelation weirdo in your life, like an uncle or a friend, it might be you. [Laughter] You’re like, oh, if I could just meet one of those weirdos, I could talk to them about Revelation and it would be awesome! We’ll read the newspaper and play connect the dots with all the anti-Christ, we’ll make charts and...well, that might be you. Give me another chance to say this is not just a book about numbers and charts. This is a book for those of us who are struggling living in an exiled culture. Feeling like we’re no longer invited to the parties anymore because we identify with Jesus. For those of us who struggle with a dark world, and how we can make an impact and wondering where God is. That’s the message for us today.

If you want to know where Revelation is, we know the book of Jude in Northview, go just a few pages over, or go to your maps at the end and flip over there, that’s where it is. We’re going to look at Revelation 1:9. The writer is John, and we believe that he was the disciple of Jesus, he wrote the book



of John, and now he's got another shot at it, but things have changed significantly. I'll talk about that in a moment. In Revelation 1:9 he says,

"I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."

So John is on an island called Patmos. It is not a Christian retreat centre, it's actually a rock quarry where political exiles, no friends of the Roman Empire, were sent there to bleach on the rocks and die. So John was sent away on account of his testimony of the word of God. See Rome in AD 96, around where this was written, they didn't necessarily know what to do with Christians. Rome's motto was to go out and conquer new lands, but to assimilate the people that they conquered into Roman culture. So make them good Romans. And one of the things they had to figure out was what to do with people's religion. You see, they have these gods that they worship, that they value, and to get them to worship other gods is going to be difficult. So let's just say they can worship their gods, and it's part of the Roman spectrum. It's part of the Roman pantheon. So they bring them into the building and say, "We all worship your gods and these gods, and you can worship any god you want, as long as you stay Roman. So we'll teach you Roman culture, we'll teach you Roman economics, and you can keep your religious system." The Jews didn't like that idea. They only had a belief that there was one God. and so Rome had to figure out what to do with the Jews. But the good news is that they were isolated to a specific area in the Middle East, in this tiny little area, so they said, "You just do what you want in your area, pay your taxes, honor Caesar. You don't have to worship Caesar, just get along with everybody and keep quiet and we'll let you do your thing." So that's how the Romans and the Jews found a way to coexist. And then the Christians came along, and they were sort of like Jews in that they believed that there was only one God, but the Jews were distancing themselves from the Christians, and the Christians were distancing themselves from the Jews now and saying, "Well we're not like that." So what did Rome do with the Christians? It was some sub sect of Judaism, but not under the protection of Judaism. And Christianity didn't want to just stay in one little localized area, Christianity wanted to spread to the whole world. And it seemed like a threat to the Roman way of living, to the Roman Empire's way. So Christians were a problem. And they got a reputation. There was a big fire in Rome around this time, Christians got blamed for setting a fire and so while they were trying to do good and love people, they were blamed for this big fire that destroyed so much of the city. Christians got a bad reputation and so a wave of persecution broke out. Peter was crucified upside down. Paul, the writer of much of the New Testament, was beheaded. And John was sent as a political prisoner to Patmos.

We know what was going on in the church at this time, there was lots of growth, but there was also lots of confusion. Different heresies would spring up, people trying to wrestle with their theology. How do we all become one with Jews and Greeks and Romans? How do we worship together? How do we become one? Lots of confusion in the church. So John probably feels very distant from his beloved congregation, which he cared so much about, and he wanted to see grow. And there he is, imprisoned, or in exile, on this island, and he says he's praying on a Sunday. What's he praying about? "Well God, make it sunny, and please give us all good health today, and bless these rocks to my



body's nourishment..." Well he's probably praying, "Jesus, where are you? You were supposed to be leading this great mission and things are in chaos. I'm confused. I don't know what's going to happen next to me. I feel far from my loved ones, I feel far from the church. Where are you?" You know, it's interesting to think of how God would have answered that prayer. There's a lot of things that he could have done, right? Jesus could have given him a bag of money, because pastors always need money to fund their visions. It's just the way it works. You need more money. Give him some money, Jesus has all the money, give him the money and go overthrow Rome. Or give him at least a plan, a blueprint. "Here's how you can get around the Roman Empire. Here's an assassination strategy that will work every time. Here's a bridge, or I'll just whisk you over, back to the church, and I'll rescue you from this." He doesn't do any of those things. How does Jesus answer the prayer of a restless, fearful disciple? Because I think there's something for us to learn today about how he answers our prayers.

Before I get into it, I just want to say one more thing, do a bit of work, about the book of Revelation. What John sees, and then what he writes after, is the part that is often confusing to us. The setting we can kind of wrap our minds around, it's a difficult time for Christianity. The church may be growing numerically, but there's all kinds of trouble and the leaders are struggling with how to lead through this chaos. So what John gets is actually a gift for the church, but it's a gift that's kind of confusing at times. The first reason why it's confusing at times is there's all kinds of imagery because it's a prison letter. And so what we know is that John would have had to read a letter, and then he would have had to give it to the guards that are assigned to him, and they would read through it to make sure this is not some subversive plot, or some kind of hate speech. And so John's got to clear it with the guards to get to its audience. And so, if he had written something like, "Hey, you know that big Roman Empire that seems like it's growing and overtaking the world? Well, actually, it's a drunken harlot and her doom is certain, and the Roman Empire is not something we're going to have to worry about long term. While now it may have a lot of power, one day it will fall. And King Jesus is the true King, the true Lord of Lords, and the only one worthy of our worship. So Caesar, don't worship him, because it's not going to work well for you in the end. Temporarily, maybe. But long term, no." John's not going to get that letter passed by the guards. It's going to get ripped up or thrown in the fire. So he's got to use imagery to get around the guards, to get to its audience, the church, at the time. And for all of us today.

The second reason why it's got these images and these sights, is because John sees something, and he has a hard time describing it. I mean, you know this, right? You've had an amazing experience, maybe you saw a movie and someone wanted you to give a summary of the movie, and you had a hard time doing it. Or you had an experience with God that was so moving to you, and then someone asked about it, and you couldn't quite describe it in words. Your words failed to describe the experience. And so it's hard to communicate that which we see, so John has to use similes and metaphors. You know, I've had to use similes and metaphors in my English papers before, and it was like...it was like...hard. [Laughter] So it's a prison letter, it's full of breathtaking images that are very hard to get on paper in simply writing it out literally. And thirdly, Revelation is a genre of literature that we don't write anymore. It's what we call apocalyptic literature, but apocalyptic doesn't mean things that happen in the future, apocalyptic literature is a breaking through. It's things that are going on that are breaking through our culture today. And so there were some truths that John wanted to



communicate, but he wanted to use a type of literature that was common in the first century. Even in the book of Daniel we see the latter half of Daniel, that type of literature being used, we see it in Zechariah, and throughout the book of Revelation. But we don't get a lot of apocalyptic books these days, and so it's a foreign genre to us today. So we do a little bit of work, and we can understand, this is what it mean to its intended audience, and this is what it means for us today.

Darrell Johnson, who I would highly recommend anybody who's interested in learning more about Revelation, wrote a book called *Discipleship on the Edge*. He says that the nature of Revelation is twofold. There's two things that Revelation seeks to do. And one is to present unseen realities in light of the future. To present unseen realities in light of the future. Now why would that be helpful for us today? Well, you don't have to put your hand up, I will, but those of who are longsuffering Vancouver Canucks fans would know that as we start to ramp up for another year that's going to be coming, another season, we would like to know, is this going to be the year? I mean, we think that often, we don't think about it as much these days. But we like to think, is this going to be the year, maybe, that I should renew my sports package, that I should pay attention to some of the games, that I should learn some of the players' names and their backgrounds, hear their stories? Should I be a Canucks fan again? What if somebody in a big, grey car showed up, doors opened up, he was a mad scientist and smoke was coming everywhere and said, "I have seen the future! I've come back from June 2019, and I saw Bo Horvat hoisting the Stanley Cup over his head. My friends, this is the year the Canucks win the Stanley Cup!" You think, wow, if this is the year, I'm in. I'm going to start to pay attention, right from training camp, I'm going to watch all the games, so one day I can say that the year the Vancouver Canucks won the Stanley Cup, I watched the entire season. And if they lowered their prices, I might even go to a game once or twice. [Laughter] Sometimes having information from the future helps us interpret our events in the present. So Revelation gives us the ending of the great story that God is telling with human history. And it's a story that involves evil, involves injustice, involves tribulation and troubles, especially for God's people. And yet in the end, Jesus wins. And how are we then to interpret our present circumstances, our present cultural climate, knowing that in the end Jesus wins? So that's the first thing that Revelation helps us with.

The second one is this: to present unseen realities in light of an unseen present. As I mentioned before, many of us pray prayers like, "God, what are you doing? God, where are you? Why are you not moving in this situation?" And it seems like God is nowhere to be seen, like God doesn't care. Like God is not doing anything. Like maybe he's preoccupied with the planet Pandora, and helping the blue people because there's still some hope that they're redeemable. I know you don't watch a lot a movies, but that was from *Avatar*. [Laughter] But things are not as they seem, according to the book of Revelation. While it may seem like God is not at work, that God has maybe abandoned us, or maybe that God is, more personally, maybe you think that God has abandoned you. Maybe you've done too many things that you feel have compromised your relationship with God, and therefore God has written you off. But things are not as they seem, says the book of Revelation. So all that to say, let's now set the stage for a picture of Jesus, an answer to prayer, that is truly what a restless disciple needs, for all of us today. You can read it on the screen behind me, or you can even close your eyes and just listen. But John hears a voice saying, "Write down what you hear," and then in Revelation 1:12 he says,



“Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man [that’s a title for Jesus from the Old Testament, and Jesus used it himself.] clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.”

You know, I read those verses, I read about that picture of Jesus as he is now, and I’m reminded that I often need to re-evaluate my view of Jesus. Sometimes when we pray to Jesus, we picture flannelgraph Jesus from our Sunday school days. They don’t have flannelgraph these days, but the picture of Jesus is often some very meek and mild and weak character, with very nice flowing, coiffed hair. But the kind of Jesus that most people could beat up. And while that’s true that Jesus was great with kids, and very mild and humble, we have to mature our picture of what Jesus is to this idea. To this conquering King, who is pure and strong and mighty. Majestic, awe inspiring. And could conquer all his enemies. That this is Jesus as he is today. This is not the Jesus that we sit there and, “Oh yes, let me sit here and evaluate some of the claims that he made. I will make a few thoughts and then maybe I’ll reject some of them, and I will accept the ones that I like. But otherwise, I’ll keep Jesus and say, you’re just this little idea, this philosophy. Or this person who lived a long time ago.” No. We need to mature our view of Jesus to realize that we do not judge him. He judges us. John gets a gift, and then he gets the most beautiful picture of Jesus as he is today. And he is left with the task of writing down what he sees, and it’s difficult. But it’s beautiful.

And then what does Jesus do to his struggling, confused, terrified at this point, disciple? I love the tenderness of Jesus as well. So Jesus, you have the perfect mix. You have power and you have tenderness. Revelation 1:18 says,

“He laid his right hand on me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.’”

He lays his right hand on him and says, “Don’t be afraid. Remember who I am and look at me.” We’re going to talk a little bit about those three, but I want you to realize that what commentators would suggest is that this is the foundation of the book of Revelation. This is almost like the thesis statement where it’s all about no matter what you see, no matter what’s going on, no matter how dark things get, you need to get this picture of Jesus, and then realize that he’s telling us, “No matter what happens, do not be afraid. Remember who I am, and keep your eyes on me.” The “fear not” thing, is quite popular in the Bible. I once got a meme come across my newsfeed, it said, “Did you know that there are 365 times in the Bible where the words ‘do not be afraid’ are commanded from the very mouth of God, or somebody speaking on behalf of God? So everyday we are reminded that in light of our fears, we are to not be afraid, because the Bible tells us 365 times.” I was interested in that. And you know, the truth is that we could all take a quick look and see if that’s true. There’s software available online right in your very pockets right now that would tell us how many times the Bible says it. And the truth





is that it's not 365 times, it's only about 130 times. Some variation of "be not afraid," "fear not," "be ye not afraid." Does that mean, therefore, that it's okay for Christians to live in fear two thirds of the year? And the other 130 or so times, that's when we actually have to have some kind of courage? Those of us who take the Bible seriously know that when the Bible says it just once, the command "do not be afraid," we should not be afraid. See, God loves us so much that he doesn't want us to be living everyday in fear. Fear of what could happen, fear of what we could do, fear of...I mean there's all kinds of fears. We make up new fears all the time. There's always these obscure fears that you're hearing about on the news. They made up a new fear the other day, do you have that fear? But God doesn't want us living in fear. He wants us to be courageous, that's why he said 130 times, and in this passage today, "Do not be afraid."

So okay, that seems like a platitude, that seems interesting, but why should I not be afraid? Well, Jesus qualifies that statement with the next point: "Remember who I am, and remember what I have done." As a pastor I have realized, and as a human being I have realized, that when we have fear, usually it's a combination of two things that are put into question. The first one is God's character. The second one is God's power. When we are living in fear, we are either doubting God's character or doubting his power or both at the same time. And Jesus addresses both here as he seeks to encourage John. The first thing he says is, "Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am the first and the last." And that's a very dynamic statement. He says, "I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end," emphasizing the fact that he says, "I was there in the beginning, and I am going to wrap this whole thing up in the end. This is my story. I started it and I'm going to bring it to completion. And it's going to be a beautiful story, the likes of which your screenwriters and your storytellers have never been able to equalize. I mean, you have good stories, you guys could tell good stories, but they're always a reflection of my great story. It starts with the setting, and then there's a problem, and there's a redeemer, and it's happily ever after. I'm telling the greatest story." And you find yourself somewhere in the middle of it. And that should comfort you. Because you get to be a part of it. And yes it does involve some struggle and some suffering, but take heart, because there's a purpose for it. See, I've studied the other literature, the other philosophies, and they don't have that same promise. That everything will have meaning and purpose, and that your life actually has value. And Jesus says, "No matter how hard it gets, do not be afraid, because you are a part of my story. And I'm the living one. I died, and behold I'm alive forevermore." So just in case John was feeling like maybe Jesus was powerful but he was writing a mean story, like it's a story that's just out to get you. You know, why does this always have to happen to me while all the other people seem to have it way better? Nothing goes wrong with that guy. But for me, it's just one struggle after another. So maybe God is mean to me. We're doubting his character, we're doubting his love. Or maybe God has written me off. I've just sinned too many times. I ask for forgiveness, and maybe he's just ran out of forgiveness. But Jesus says, "No, look John, I died. I've got scars to show my love for you. I mean, read your older work, John. Read the gospel. It says, 'Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.' I died for you. I died for my people. What greater measure of love could I show? How much more could I show that I care for you? Yes, I feed birds and I clothe flowers, but I died for your sin. I took it upon myself so you wouldn't have to suffer for it. So which part of me are you doubting? Are you doubting that maybe someone is going to take your life? That death is going to be the end of you out here on this island? I've got something for you John, I want to show you this. These are keys. And



I won these with my triumphant resurrection. And I show that I am more powerful than your greatest fear, which is death. So what's concerning you now? Is it your circumstances? I'm writing a story with them. I'm doing something great with your life, and it fits with all the story of human history. Are you doubting my love for you? Look what I did for you. Are you doubting my power over your life? Over death? I hold the keys to Death and Hades in my hand. So remember who I am."

And thirdly, Jesus says, "Behold." I don't want to be an ESV snob, I know we love NIV in this church, we read from it often, but there's one point that the ESV sometimes picks up that other translations miss, and it's just this one word, it's "behold." Behold, meaning there's something important. Look at me. Look at this. Jesus says, "Behold I am alive forevermore. Keep your eyes fixed on the fact that I am alive. When it seems like I'm not doing anything, when it seems like I'm powerless, remember that things are not as they seem. And so you need to trust me. But you're going to lose trust in me if you start looking around at the state of the empire, the state of the economy, the state of your family, the state of the churches. You've got to keep your eyes fixed on me and you will have a solid hope and focus. See, you know this, right? Any of you who are treadmill people. Right, you're running on the treadmill, what's the best idea to do when running on a treadmill to stay solid? Keep your eyes focused ahead. You start looking around, right, you're running, and all of a sudden you start looking, oh, wonder what those people are doing...what can happen? All of a sudden you hear some commotion over there and you want to go look, and then all of a sudden, look over there, and you're back. Falling off, fumbling all over the place. And Peter learned this, John was right there in the boat. Peter wanted to walk across to see Jesus, walk on the water, and then it says that Peter started to get distracted, and he looked at the wind and the waves and he started to sink. And that was the start of his demise. John was there. So the lesson for him is, just like Peter was supposed to do, just like we're supposed to do, "Keep your eyes fixed on me. Don't start looking at the culture, don't start looking at the bad news. Keep your eyes fixed on me."

So how about us today? How many of us are restless? How many of us are afraid? How many of us are wondering, God, where are you? And what could happen next to us? The interesting thing is, just before our passage it says that Jesus was amongst the lampstands, actually it's in Revelation 1:12 there, it says,

"Turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man."

We learn that those lampstands are a symbol of the churches. And so Jesus is there in the midst of the churches. The one who is alive forevermore was there then, and he's here today. And I believe that Jesus would walk amongst us today, the resurrected, powerful Jesus would walk around, and he would put a hand on each of his restless disciples this morning. And he would say, "Don't be afraid. Remember who I am. And behold, look at me." That's the gift of Revelation for us. For the church across the centuries, is to remind us that Jesus is powerful. That he has won a great victory over Satan, sin and death. We have nothing to fear.





Just to review, the nature of Revelation is to present unseen realities in light of the future. How much does it help you to know that no matter how dark it gets, that no matter how much evils seems to be prevailing, that no matter what you hear from a sociologist or in the news or from friends about how Christianity is on the decline in Canada, how much does it encourage you to know that Jesus will win in the end? And how much does it encourage you this morning that unseen realities presented in light of the unseen present promise us that while Jesus himself said, "In this world you will have trouble, take heart, I have overcome the world," is the same one that said, "I will build my church," and that that's what Jesus is doing today? Things are not as they seem. God is on the throne. He is in control and he will achieve victory over all his enemies. If you are an enemy of God today and you have not given your life to Jesus, you have not aligned with him, let me just warn you, it does not go well for you in the end. The best thing you can do is repent of your sin and turn to Jesus.

I want to share one more story. The summer is kind of a boring time for sports. You know, the Blue Jays are struggling this year, the Lions are not doing any good, so let's tell another hockey story. 2011 was a big year for Canucks fans. It was the year we thought we were going to make it, we were going to go all the way. But to do so, we had to first get over the Chicago Blackhawks. And they had defeated us in the first round two years in a row, but it looked like as the Canucks were getting up in the series, that we could finally defeat them and move on, past the first round. Well, Chicago got back in the series, it was 3 - 3, went into game 7, but the Canucks took an early lead and that was encouraging. Maybe this is the year we finally defeat them. But then the Chicago Blackhawks came back and put the game into overtime. Oh, just thinking about that day makes me stressed. [Laughter] I remember yelling things that I shouldn't have yelled and thinking things that were even worse. Friends looking at me like, are you really a pastor? I remember thinking evil thoughts against Chicago Blackhawks players when they would trip up our guys. I remember wanting to just publicly humiliate certain Canucks players who would let in goals at certain times when we needed a big save. The things that I was thinking, the things that I was saying were totally ungodly. But I was all into the game. Back and forth it went. I was totally stressed out, anxious and fearful that we might lose again in the first round of the Chicago Blackhawks. By now, Alex Burrows comes flying down the wing and rips a slapshot and slays the dragon. And the Canucks are in round two. <Sighs>

Let me tell you another story of someone else who was watching that game. Totally different experience from what I just described from myself. They were at peace. They had a sense of levity about their heart. While they were very dyed-in-the-wool Vancouver Canucks fans, they were not stressed out, they were not yelling things or thinking things that they would later have to repent of. People enjoyed being around them, they were a bit of a treat to watch the game with. And then Alex Burrows came down the wing, ripped a slapshot and slayed the dragon. And there was victory. Satisfaction. Joy. Two different experiences, two different people. But let me tell you this. It was the same person watching it. It was me. But I was completely different the second time. You see, the NHL Network was running a show called *The NHL Classics* where they were showing classic games. I don't watch a lot of TV [laughter] but I had the chance to watch this classic game, things were quiet, the kids were asleep and I could watch it. And I remember thinking back to the first time I watched it, how stressed I was and how different it was to watch it the second time. I was a different person. Relaxed, full of joy, and confident that no matter what happened, no matter how dark it got, no matter what they



did to us, we were going to win in the end. And when they scored the goal, it was just like yup, I saw that coming. [Laughter]

Brothers and sisters, today we have the book that tells us how things go in the end. That Jesus wins, and that is what we anchor our hope and our courage and our joy in. And no matter how dark it gets, we know the light will break through and Jesus will come and reign with us. And we, his people, will join him. And it will be a great moment. And that's our promise today. How many people did that bring a message of courage and hope for you? Since you will go out there into this world that seems dark, and no matter how bad it gets, you will be a person of joy, of courage, of love. And no matter what is said to you or done to you, you will be able to love your enemies and praise Jesus. Let me pray for you.

Lord Jesus, I just want to thank you for this word. I would be a mess if it wasn't for the promise that in the end you win. I would think that it would all depend on me, I might want to give up. If we didn't have this big picture of you, Jesus, I might have seen you as irrelevant. And yet, you've blessed your church with the gift of the book of Revelation, to remind us for such a time as this, in this great nation, that you've given us. So Lord, we pray for Canada, we pray for the churches, that you would make them beautiful today, and we pray for every Christian, that they would see Jesus, and that there is great reason to have to be a person of hope and courage today, no matter what they are facing. And so Lord, give us that strength, that reminder, by the power of your Spirit, as we go to be salt and light in this world. Lord, if there's anybody here, I pray, that is still on the fence about following you, Lord I pray they would make the right decision and join your team, because you win in the end. May they make the decision to turn from sin and to follow you. I pray that in Jesus' name. And all God's people said amen.