

*I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. <sup>13</sup> He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. <sup>14</sup> The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. <sup>15</sup> Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:*

*KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

*(Revelation 19:11-16)*

### **Jesus Fights for Us!**

Several years ago, we picked up a DVD of some old *Lone Ranger* episodes and for a few weeks, my kids were kind of interested in old Westerns. Back when kids used to watch Westerns regularly, everyone knew that the guy on the white horse would be the good guy. Always there was a villain, usually wearing a black hat and riding a much darker colored horse, and some rancher or even a whole town was at his mercy until the Lone Ranger or Roy Rogers or whoever the rider on the white horse was came and saved the day. TV shows and movies are not as simple today as they were back then. But we still recognize the image of the rider on the white horse. And I wonder if that image doesn't have its roots in the portion of the Word of God that we have before us tonight. Throughout the Easter season we've been studying portions of the book of Revelation. We've seen again and again how God used imagery to make a point. Tonight we have a rider on a white horse, a rider that clearly represents Jesus. And what does he do? Very simply, **Jesus fights for us!**

#### **I.**

Now, the rider John saw had many crowns on his head and the very last words of the text say that he is the king of kings and lord of lords. What does that have to do with the Lone Ranger type image of someone who fights for the helpless? Well, in the past, that's what kings did. That's why people wanted kings. They recognized that the world was a dangerous place and they wanted a strong warrior to rule them so that he could protect them. That part of a king's job is at the heart of this vision that the Apostle John saw. **Jesus fights for us. That's what kings do.**

So Jesus on a white horse is Jesus pictured as a warrior riding out to conquer. Does that image strike you a little funny? It's easy for us to picture Jesus as the Good Shepherd. It's easy for us to picture Jesus blessing the little children. It's easy for us to picture Jesus dying on the cross or holding out the nail prints in his palms for Thomas to see after he rose. We can even picture the event of the Ascension – Jesus rising up into the air to leave us, visibly. But Jesus mounted on a white horse, with a double edged sword coming out of his mouth to conquer his enemies, well, that's not the way we usually think of him.

Most conquerors are not nice people. None of us want to compare Jesus to guys like Adolf Hitler or Saddam Hussein. And with good reason! Jesus is not like them. He's not trying to feed his own ego. Jesus is riding to conquer the enemies of the gospel and of his people here. His victory on Judgment Day is about defeating the devil and sin and setting us free from all hurt and sorrow forever. John said, **“With justice he judges and makes war.”** On Judgment Day, Jesus is going to give sinners what they deserve. What every sinner deserves is death and hell. God commands all people everywhere to love him with all that we are. That means more than just that we have a nice feeling about him. It means that we put him first in all that we say and do. That we think about what he commands and what he wants before we speak or act. That means that we change our opinions and even our feelings when he commands something different than what we want. If we don't live that way perfectly, we are his enemies. On Judgment Day, Jesus fights against his enemies and sends them to hell.

What gives him the right to do that? John hints at it: he says that Jesus has a name that no one knows. In the ancient world, your name told what you really were. That's why God picked the name “Jesus” when his

Son came into this world. Jesus means Savior and that's what Jesus is. But in another sense, we have to admit that we can't possibly know all that Jesus is. He is the Son of God. We can't even begin to understand what that means. Can you explain the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit? How do one plus one plus one equal one? Even the youngest children who sang this evening know that math is wrong. But that's what God is. That's who Jesus is. Because he is the Son of God, he is the judge of all the earth. With justice he will judge and make war against those who refuse his offer of life.

But lest this image of Jesus the conqueror seem too terrifying, remember, Jesus fights for us. He did that first of all on the cross. Because our hearts don't belong totally to God, we do deserve death and hell. We were God's enemies at the moment we are conceived. But Jesus fought for us. He went to the cross and he won eternal life for us. Now, he didn't ride a white horse on that day. He didn't have an army behind him. He went there alone and he died for us. Dying and rising to pay for our sin – that won eternal life for you and for me. To this very day, he is still fighting for us. He fights with the sword that comes out from his mouth. That represents his Word. When he used that word to give us faith, Jesus won us. When he convicts us of sin and then he forgives and strengthens us he is fighting for our faith in this life. And on Judgment Day, when he condemns his enemies to hell, and then takes us to live with him forever, he will win one final victory for us.

That victory will all be his. The very first thing I noticed when I began to study these words for tonight was the fact that Jesus had an army behind him. John said, "**The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.**" Do you know why this struck me? Because a long time ago, I was in the army. And soldiers on their way to battle don't look like this. They aren't dressed in fine linen, white and clean. These soldiers are dressed for a parade, not for a battle. The only person in this entire vision who's ready for battle is Jesus. Kings did not face their enemies alone in the past, but Jesus did. He alone went to the cross for us. He alone holds the devil in check today with his word today. Jesus alone will send his enemies to hell on the last day.

## II.

Only when we recognize how Jesus fights as our warrior king do we understand the world that we live in. When God sent his Son into this world he made defeat glorious. And he made glory worthless. Think about it. When only do we see Jesus the way he is pictured for us this evening? Only in visions of heaven. Only when we're talking about Judgment Day. Never before. Today, Jesus is the King and today he is fighting for us. But he ascended so that we can't see him doing it. We have to trust his promise that he's doing that. And in this life, how many times doesn't it seem hard to trust that? It's one thing when we're gathered here and the kids are singing and those triumphant Ascension hymns send a chill down our spine. But it's something else when you're sitting at the dining room table trying to figure out how you're going to pay your mortgage this month with one of you laid off and the other making less than you used to. It's something else when you're wrestling with people at work who make your life miserable or people at school who make your kid's life miserable. It's something else when you're waiting for those medical test results to come back and you can't sleep because you're worried about who's going to take care of your kids if you don't make it.

In this life, God hides his glory behind suffering and hurt and persecution. He did that on the cross. The Son of God died like a criminal there for us. He did that in his word. God comes to us through talking, through preachers who sometimes don't know when to stop talking and who don't always understand what's going on in your life. But the Holy Spirit comes through simple words when we proclaim the gospel. And Jesus fights for us, even though we can't see him, even though he allows suffering and hardship to touch us, even though it seems like unbelievers never have it as hard as we do.

So God showed us a vision. And the truth is, he didn't even show it to us. He showed it to John two thousand years ago and had him write it down so that we could talk about it for all these years. In that vision, Jesus rides in on a white horse and he conquers our enemies. He does that for us. That's why he ascended into heaven. And the day is coming when we will see it.

All that means something very simple: **Jesus is fighting for us. We can't lose.** That's hard to see right now. Because sin is all around us, because God has hidden his glory right now, doubt and fear are real parts of our lives. And they are sin, make no mistake about it. God's commands really come down to one simple command: trust me perfectly. We don't do that. We can't. Instead, many of us here tonight are first class worriers. All that doubt is sin. But we will never overcome doubt by beating ourselves up. You can't make your trust stronger by saying to yourself, "Come on! Stop worrying!" That only makes you feel more guilty

because you're such a big worry wart. You can't manipulate your emotions to hide your fear and worry. It will still be there. And God will know it's there.

But you can hear the gospel. God knows how weak our hearts are. God knows how easy it is for us to worry and how hard it is for us to trust in Jesus while he's ascended. God knows the agony that fear and pain are here for us. So he built his power to conquer our fear and worry into those simple words of the gospel. God tells us that Jesus did not abandon us when he left us. He ascended into heaven to fight for us. He will win, just like he won on the cross and in the empty tomb. He will win even when it looks like we're losing here. He will win and bring us at last to live with him and then, all of this will be over.

Until that day comes when we stand with him, he comes to us in his Word – the sword that comes out of his mouth. He comes to us in the waters of baptism; he comes to us in communion and in the forgiveness that our pastor announces to us; he comes to us in the gospel and he builds us up. He will keep on doing that for as long as we live here. While we live here, we have to understand that we will never reach a level of faith where we don't need him to keep coming. We will always be sinners here. That means that our hearts will always have trouble trusting. Indeed, our hearts could not trust in Jesus without the power of God in the gospel. And until we die or the Lord comes back, we will live in a sinful world that makes glory here seem like winning. So for as long as we live here, we will need the gospel. You can never hear it too much.

Every time you hear it, God is working. Every time you hear it, Jesus works in your heart and fights against the fears and the doubt that threaten to overcome your faith here. And in the end, you will win. You can't lose, because Jesus, your King is fighting for you. Amen.