**Revelation 1:4b-8** Grace to you and peace from him who is, who was, and who is coming, and from the seven spirits that are before his throne, 5and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his own blood 6and made us a kingdom and priests to God his Father—to him be the glory and the power forever. Amen. 7Look, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him, including those who pierced him. And all the nations of the earth will mourn because of him. Yes. Amen. 8“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, the one who is, and who was, and who is coming, the Almighty.”

 Here it is, Christ the King Sunday. This is considered an “End of Time” section of the pericope that we use as we cover the church year. Pericopies are designed to take you through the life of Jesus: his coming, his birth, his revelation, his passion and death, his resurrection and ascension and then finally in the Sunday’s after Pentecost, through various parts of his acts on earth to help us grasp all the more who and what He is. That last four Sundays of Pentecost are “End Times” Sundays.

 Now I have to tell you that I was surprised to recently learn that the new hymnal that the WELS has produced, has taken away this “End of Time” section of the pericope and has returned those Sundays back into Sundays after Pentecost. I don’t recall reading why they determined to do this, but I am a bit saddened that it has been done. These Sundays of End Time, I felt, served to greatly highlight all the more the importance of Christ and his Eternal message for God’s people.

 So what are those Sundays of End Time? It starts with Reformation Sunday. That’s a day when we highlight the utter importance of the Gospel of Jesus for the world. Reformation is not about being Lutheran but rather Reformation is to be about that central Gospel message of Jesus and its saving message of grace in Jesus. Then comes the Sunday of Last Judgment.

 It is exactly what it sounds like, an opportunity to focus on the coming last Day of Judgment that we are promised in Jesus is coming. For the Christian it is a day of rejoicing and triumph but for the unbeliever it is a day of distress and condemnation. The fulcrum point of this Sunday is…you got it…Jesus and his message of salvation to all who believe. What a sad church we are if we stop teaching that Jesus is the only way to eternal life and salvation.

 The next Sunday is Saints Triumphant, yep, last week’s focus. This Sunday is an opportunity to speak of the eternal joys of God’s Kingdom. We get to speak of what God has done and is going to do for us as we enter into his realm of existence. It is a beautiful picture of peace, joy, grace and marvel of such great nature that it is hard to fully wrap our minds around it. It is God’s eternal gift to us in Jesus, the culmination of our faith. We get this gift simply because we absolutely trust and hope in Jesus as our Savior from sin.

 And then comes our Sunday for today. Christ the King Sunday. The last Sunday of the church year. On this day we get to emphasize exactly what and why Jesus is so important in our life. It becomes clear that Jesus is not just a nice guy, some clever guy who had some good and pious ideas about this world. Jesus is truly a “believe or don’t believe” figure. Either he is what is revealed about him or He is not. Your stand on this makes the difference not only for this life but especially for the life to come. Our theme for today will be: **WHO IS JESUS?**

 As we begin to contemplate this section of God’s Word let’s just start by talking about that last phrase of this text, verse 8. Verse 8 is all the more on my mind because as I was copying and pasting the new EHV readings to the bulletin, somehow I managed to miss verse 8 on my first pass. It was only later on, as I was doing my sermon text study, that I realized that I was missing verse 8 in the bulletin. So, as I said, verse 8 ended up really on my mind and I am telling you, the words here are absolutely astounding. I thank God for helping to highlight them for me.

 First, these words are a description of Jesus. Those first words always catch our attention. It says, **“I am the Alpha and the Omega.”** Many a time, in response to these words we pastors would sometimes rather callously proclaim, *“Alpha is the first Greek letter and Omega is the last Greek letter in the alphabet. Therefore this phrase is one that highlights the eternal nature of Jesus.”*

 There is nothing wrong with what I just said and have said many times, but truly, the use of this phrase is actually deeper than just Jesus being eternal. In a wonderful book called, *“Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament”* authors Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers take opportunity to dig into the depths of what things mean. In regard to this phrase they write (page 812) *“’alpha,’ the first letter of the Gr. Alphabet. ‘omega,’ the last letter of the Gr. Alphabet. The phrase is seen to express not eternity only, but infinitude, the boundless life which embraces all while it transcends all.”*

 I read that and I had to go back and reread it a few more times to let the absolute magnitude of those words sink in. *“The phrase is seen to express not eternity only, but infinitude, the boundless life which embraces all while it transcends all.”* People, that’s Jesus! Jesus is infinite but this phrase wants us to grasp that Jesus’ infinity is boundless and endless but even more, Jesus embraces all and surrounds all. I think if we take all the things Jesus said of himself we might begin to grasp this. Jesus said he is: the Life, the Light, the Way, the Truth, the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, the Vine, the Good Shepherd, the Gate, the Word, the Lamb of God and the Risen Savior. Yes, Jesus is all of these things. He is “the Alpha and Omega.” Now tell me, which phrase, which aspect of Jesus that He claims for himself, do you figure we can dismiss and ignore? Who here is brave enough to say, “That’s all just make believe!” No. It is Jesus, the full and infinite revelation of Jesus and what He is.

 Of course, in our words, there is more. Did you happen to note who is attributed as saying these words. The text says, **“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, the one who is, and who was, and who is coming, the Almighty.”** These are the words of the Lord God. And to make sure you don’t have any misconceptions as to exactly what that means we then find a descriptive phrase about the Lord God. Who is this Lord God? **“The one who is, and who was, and who is coming, the Almighty.”** Now, if already you are not in complete and total awe about God, let me explain why you should be.

 Do you remember the first verse of this section? That verse said this: **“Grace to you and peace from him who is, who was, and who is coming, and from the seven spirits that are before his throne, 5and from Jesus Christ.”** Go ahead, take a breath. Notice that this verse sounds exactly like what Jesus says he is. But notice that clearly our words here that speak of **“Him who is, who was, and who is coming, and from the seven spirits before his throne”** are addressing someone else, because the very next phrase says, **“And from Jesus Christ.”** That first verse of our text actually references God the Father and God the Holy Spirit but it does so in words that help you grasp that exactly what the Father and Spirit are such is Jesus. The vast, incomprehensible, eternal, infinite God is Jesus.

 God in both our verses is described as **“Him who is, who was, and who is coming.”** This is a literal translation of name “Yaweh” from the Hebrew. God’s name is literally, “I was, I am, I will be.” This name is given to both Jesus and the Father. It is the name of the eternal and true God, the only God who has displayed his might and revealed his grace in our world. That’s what I said. The only God who has displayed his might and revealed his grace in our world. Name one other, any other religion of this world, where the God worshipped has done everything for you. God has loved you, cared for you, forgiven you, and sent a Savior for you. This is our God, the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. There is no other God or religion that has the message we and only we can claim: God has saved our souls.

 Now notice what else our entire text says of Jesus. He is called: **“the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”** That’s Jesus. You want to grasp the true and only God, look to Jesus. Jesus has revealed the Father’s love, lived the Father’s love, died in love for the Father’s love and shared everything necessary for eternal life and salvation in the Holy Word. You get Jesus, well then, you get the Father and all that love God has for us.

 Notice Jesus is called: **“the firstborn from the dead.”** Clearly a reference to his resurrection and what that resurrection means for every one of us. It speaks of Jesus dying and we know that Jesus died on the cross. Jesus died there paying for our sins and then, just as the Father promised, Jesus rose from the dead, the Firstborn. Calling Jesus the firstborn means there are others who will be raised. Jesus is the first and after him comes all those who believe in his name. All will be raised because He is the God of love and life. And because of his resurrection, He has ascended into heaven where he sits at God’s right hand. All authority, or as stated here, **“the ruler of the kings of the earth,”** is given to Jesus.

 I’ll tell you, if you aren’t in total and complete awe, utterly blown away by this revelation of who and what Jesus is then I don’t think you are listening. This is our God! This is our Savior!

 I know, there are those out there who tell us that the Bible doesn’t speak that way of Jesus. Okay, their Bible doesn’t. It doesn’t because they twist and contort or simply throw out what they think is too hard to believe. If and when you hear someone say that they don’t believe Jesus to have been “our sacrifice for sin” or “to have atoned for us” then take them to this section of God’s Word.

 Because the next words are solely addressed to Jesus. They say, **“To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his own blood and made us a kingdom and priests to God his Father—to him be the glory and the power forever. Amen.”**

 My Dear believers, hey World!!!! This verse tells us clearly that Jesus who loved us, paid for our sins by his blood. Actually, it says he freed us, he released us from our sins. That release is connected to his blood. His death on the cross was done for us. It was planned by the Lord, revealed by the Lord, carried out by the Lord and then Jesus came and became our Savior from sin. The atoning sacrifice that all those Old Testament sacrifices pointed to! The bloody lamb killed so that death would Passover your home because you trusted the blood of the lamb. It was pointing to Jesus and now he has been here and carried out the very plan of salvation God has decreed. We are forgiven and with that forgiveness changed and renewed to be God’s children and heirs of eternal life. We are the children of his kingdom. The priests of his Holy Christian Church. All so we might give him glory and honor. And why not? Doesn’t he deserve that glory and honor? Didn’t He give his very life for your soul? Are you going to tell me that you don’t think Jesus is worthy of your praise and thanks? I do! I praise and thank God that I have been given the gift of faith and the hope of salvation in Jesus. That alone is worth everything I have.

 Now, if you don’t think Jesus is worthy of praise and honor then contemplate what is said next. **“Look, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will see him, including those who pierced him. And all the nations of the earth will mourn because of him.”** Here is one of those passages that does a very simple thing. It reveals the truth of heaven and hell. Jesus is coming back to be the eternal judge of all. When you believe, you have the gift He came to bring you, eternal life and wonder forever and ever. If you reject Jesus and in your life show him that you don’t give one iota of consideration his way, then he simply tells you that you will mourn because of him. It is a quiet and subtle way of telling you about the truth of hell. No threat. No stomping and screaming about it. Just the facts. That’s often the way Scripture is. Just tells us the facts. You can either believe as God has called you to do or you can deny and reject God as is the very bent of your sinful nature. But it is just the facts. The simple facts.

 And then comes the beautiful words of verse 8. Consider their impact now. **“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, the one who is, and who was, and who is coming, the Almighty.”**

 Jesus, the God who embodies all, fulfills all, sustains all, and permeates all: Jesus the eternal and timeless God: Jesus, the One with all power and might, strength and dominion; Jesus calls to us. He proclaims his wonder and might. He invites us to contemplate and marvel. He declares the absolute fact of His very self. He is our God. He is our King. He is our Savior! The Lord God Almighty.

 Please, believe and be his child. Amen.