

Keep Your Head Up So You're Ready To Sing

A Sermon on Rev. 5:11-14
Year C - Easter 3
10 - April - 2016

JJ¹

A door opens and you are led into the throne room of the King. The scene is more spectacular than the most brilliant sunset you have ever seen. In the center is the throne of God the Father who is sitting on his throne. His glory is shining forth with beams of technicolor light and brilliant flashes of lightening and the cracks of thunder quake through your body. But with such sounds and glory, the sea surrounding the throne is like glass! Around the throne seven lamps are blazing.

As you look out from the throne, you see ever-expanding circles. Right next to the throne is a circle of four super-angelic living creatures unlike anything you've ever seen. One looks like a lion, another an ox, the third has the face of a man and the fourth like an eagle. They're covered with eyes and each has six wings. These angels sing a never ending song: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." (Rev. 4:8)

Around the angels you see twenty-four thrones on which twenty-four elders are seated. The twelve patriarchs of the Old Testament and the twelve Apostles sit on their thrones in robes made white in the blood of the Lamb and wear crowns of gold. They, too, join in the worship and

taking their crowns off, lay them before the throne and sing: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." (Rev. 4:11)

Beyond the elders are the rest of the angels, a number too great to count. And the final circle contains all the creatures God made with all the believers who ever lived "from every nation, tribe, people and language..." (Rev. 7:9)

Then your eyes are again drawn to the throne and you see in the hand of God the Father, a scroll with seven seals. A mighty angel proclaims: "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" (Rev. 5:2) No one can be found and you begin to weep. That is, until one of the elders comes to you and says, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." (Rev. 5:5)

Then you saw him. A Lamb "looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne..." (Rev. 5:6). He took the scroll and "the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of in-

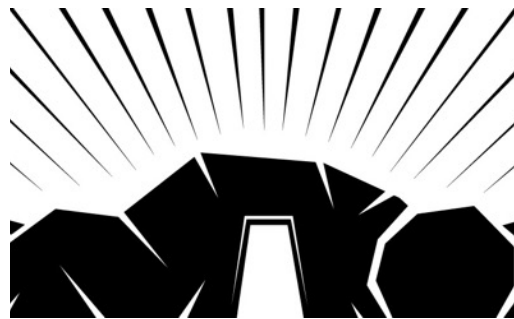
¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

cense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song:

'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.' " (Rev. 5:9-10)

Friends, this morning we are brought into the very throne room of God in John's second vision from the Lord. And how important that we are! This is the central scene of the entire book. No scene is more important for understanding the rest of the book than this vision in the throne room of God because it is here that we see the Lamb who was slain enthroned and reigning in victory!

Remember what I said last week was the overall theme of Revelation? *Jesus wins—and because he wins, we win too!* All the challenges, hardships and persecutions that John is about to see and record for us all depict the results of sinful people living in a sinful world along with Satan and all his followers fighting and clawing to drag down as many with them as they can. But remembering this scene from the throne room of God to which John will return at the end of the book reminds us that Satan's cause is a fatal, flawed and ultimately failing cause.



The Lamb, our Savior Jesus, is worthy because he obeyed and fulfilled his Father's will. The Lamb is worthy because he was slain in our place to win us for his Father with his holy blood. The Lamb is worthy because through faith, he now makes us "a kingdom and priests to serve our God" (Rev. 5:10). Through his forgiveness we are free to serve our God and one another. We are free to call on His Father as our own Father in prayer and make requests on behalf of ourselves and others. We are free to live as his representatives here on earth. The Lamb is worthy because he shall make us reign with him in the new heavens and the new earth. (Rev. 21)

Friends, all this is why you can **KEEP YOUR HEAD UP**. Yes, this vision looks to the glories of heaven, but it also points to realities now. Through our baptisms,

we are already washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. Although now we bear the cross as Christ did before his resurrection, we already reign with him. Although we don't necessarily feel like or look like winners now, in Christ we are victorious!

Friends, this is why the countless angels surrounding the throne of God can sing: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

They sing this song because the Lamb has saved *you!* He didn't save their fallen

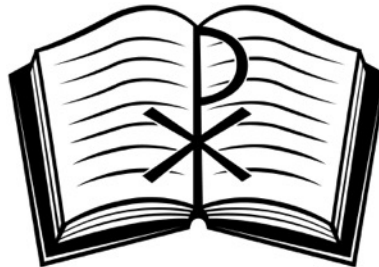
brother angels, but the crown of God's creation! They sang in joy when the Lord created the world (Job 38:7). They sang "glory to God in the highest" when the Savior was born (Luke 2:13,14). They sing songs of rejoicing whenever a sinner repents (Luke 15:10). And they all join their voices in worship and praise of "the Lamb who was slain."

Keep your head up and sing to the Lord with a life that praises and honors the Lamb who was slain for you. Keep your head up **SO YOU'RE READY TO SING** when the Lamb comes to take you home! Amen.

SDG²

Friends, if this is why the angels sing, how much more you and I!!! **KEEP YOUR HEADS UP SO YOU'RE READY TO SING** now and forever your beautiful song:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"



This is your song to sing to the Lamb, who rescues you, who carries you through every difficulty, disaster and heartache. This is your song to sing to the Lamb who promises to at last bring you, too, into his throne room where you yourself will see the Lamb who was slain for you, seated on his throne forever and ever! And there you shall sing with the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, the countless angels, every creature and all your fellow believers. Friends, in this world that is passing away, **KEEP YOUR HEAD UP!**

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

