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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
May 1, 2022
2nd Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Acts 9:1-20, John 21:1-14

Hymns: 360; 367; 344; 37:3

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Revelation 5:11-14

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,¹² saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

¹³ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

¹⁴ Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified, Risen and Exalted Lord,
dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Do you ever feel marginalized? --

That's the term used by society for those people that choose to live "alternate lifestyles" and yet claim that they are being disrespected and discriminated against simply for being true to themselves. Fundamentalist Christians are especially singled out for criticism for pointing out the obvious; that men are men and women are women, and marriage was ordained by God as the union between one man and one woman. This is but one example of society's "problem" with Biblical Christianity. One could easily add the issues of evolution leading to humanism, and abortion, and a work ethic, and practicing true charity. However, the single biggest issue that rankles the world, and has from the beginning is that Jesus Christ is Lord, and apart from Him there is no salvation.

The world has always embraced work righteousness to the praise and glory of man, and disrespected Jesus, the God Man, who died for us and rose again, and lives forevermore at the right hand of God where He makes intercession for us before the throne of God. While all the other issues give opportunity to criticize Christ believers, it is the fact that Jesus is Lord and Savior that lies at the heart of the persecution all faithful Christians will endure.

It is the goal of the devil, and this wicked world to marginalize us. The world desires to make us feel that we are ignorant, inferior, bigoted, even deplorable, and that we ought to be ashamed of what believe, teach, and confess.

This isn't anything new. This was at the root of the hatred Jesus Himself endured, and He forewarned us that we would be hated by the world also. "*A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.*" (John 15:20)

However, we should not be discouraged, or even a little bit deceived by the antics of this world. The book of Revelation reveals wonderful pictures of how things really are, and they are glorious! At the very center of this truth is the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world. Today the Holy Spirit would lead us to a greater appreciation of the fact that --

THEME: The Lamb Receives the Honor Due Him.

I. Behold the Heavenly Chorus that Honors Jesus, the Lamb!

“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,¹² saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:11-12)

This must have been a spectacular scene in the vision that John received. Not only was it glorious to behold, but also overwhelming in its scope. We need to break it down a little to comprehend exactly what the scene was like.

Many angels were gathered around the throne of God, in this scene. This is the throne of God the Father. We add to the scene the four living creatures which were described in the previous chapter as having features of a lion, a calf, a man, and a flying eagle. They each had six wings and many eyes, and they do not rest in their praise of the Lord. Yes, these creatures are mysterious; it is difficult to know exactly what they were, but most agree that they were most likely powerful angels waiting at the throne of God and praising the most holy and eternal God.

Again, we add to the scene; now it is the 24 elders. We look to other Scriptures to find some clue as to who they might be. We find the words of Jesus helpful. He taught the disciples, *“I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me,³⁰ that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* (Luke 22:29-30) We understand these words as not being limited to the twelve apostles but including all New Testament believers since we are told that we are all exalted to the status of kings and priests before the Lord. We can then easily extrapolate an equivalent status for Old Testament believers being covered by the other twelve elders correlating with the twelve tribes of Israel. This brings a fantastic feature to this vision with the twenty-four elders representing all the believers from the beginning of the world to the present time and on to the end of the age.

Add it all together and we have what is sometimes translated myriads of angels and elders, and saints gathered before the throne of God to worship and praise the Lamb who was slain.

What does that mean for you and me? Remember how we started today's sermon? Do you feel marginalized? Maybe overwhelmed by the power and might of this unbelieving world. Things are not always just as we see them. Our text is reminding us that we are far from a small number who needs to shrink back because of the might of this world. They can't cancel us. It just isn't possible. This is the way it is, and this is the way it has been from the beginning of the world.

When Noah was building the ark and only the eight people of Noah's family were left to be rescued from the flood, they were not in the minority; they were not marginalized. The evil of the world was defeated!

When Elisha and his servant were surrounded by a great army, well let's read about this in 2 Kings: *"And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"* ¹⁶ *So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."* ¹⁷ *And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see."* *Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."* (2 Kings 6:15-17)

What the Lord is teaching us is that we are not a small number incapable of standing up to the power of this world. The Lord God who sits on the throne of His almighty power, has His forces gathered around Him. What's more, He has already secured the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. What's left for us to do is praising Jesus along with this heavenly chorus.

Isn't that a powerful picture of the forces of the Lord and His saints gathered for one singular purpose, to praise Jesus. Our text declares:

II. Worthy Is the Lamb Who Was Slain!

Why is the Lamb worthy? We are immediately directed to the fact that He was slain. Why does that make Him worthy? His wasn't a pointless death. It was a sacrificial death. A great and precious sacrifice. Yes, the enemies of the Lord conspired to put Jesus to death, but in their evil, they managed to fulfill what was needed for the world's redemption. They killed the Lord of glory, a terrible sin, but Jesus the Son of God was the ransom price paid to deliver a world of sinners from death and eternal condemnation.

Only the precious blood of the Son of God could redeem an entire fallen mankind. Only the life blood of a man could be presented as the sacrifice for mankind. And so, Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for in His holiness He was not subject to death because of sin, and yet He died for sin, and took upon Himself the curse of sin, **once and for all**.

Jesus entered into death and the grave, but on the third day He took up His life again. He rose triumphant for death could not hold Him. He rose triumphant and the Lamb of God who was dead lives forevermore as our hope of resurrection and life.

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

All authority has been given to Jesus the Lamb, all power, all riches, the world and all that is in it, all the riches of heavenly glory, all there is in this world is rightfully His. His is the wisdom of salvation, the truth that saves This glorious truth that is hidden from the mind of man is revealed in Christ Jesus. His is the almighty power. He holds all things together by the power of His Word. He is honored as the God of our salvation, and we praise and glorify His name.

How this is different from before the incarnation is that Jesus remains the Son of Man. Jesus is exalted also according to His human nature, and we shall worship and honor Jesus as God.

Remember the words of Paul to the Philippians: *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,⁷ but made*

Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:5-11)

He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. For this reason, God exalted Jesus and made the name “**Jesus**” the name that is above every name! That is why we praise Him as Lord and Savior. But the point is made in our text as well is in these words of Paul, --

III. All Creation Shall Praise the Exalted Lamb.

“And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13)

The Lamb who was slain receives the honor due Him. Right now this praise comes from the Christ believers in heaven and on earth. However, it shall not always be limited that way. That is what was revealed to John in this vision. The Lamb shall receive the honor and glory due His name by **every creature under heaven**. All creation shall praise Jesus, whether it be with the joy of salvation, or the acknowledgement of their error and unbelief. It is as the Apostle Paul said, every knee shall bow before Him, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, all to the glory of God the Father.”

The message of Easter is the message of a great victory. That is what the Book of Revelation, and this vision in particular teaches us. Our text ends with a great “AMEN” passage. *“Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.” (v.14)* The four living creatures, these mighty servants of God most high,

proclaim **AMEN!** That is an absolute endorsement, saying, “This is the way it is,” or as Luther said in the Catechism “**This is Most Certainly True!**” And so, we are to take it to heart and remember that we are represented in this vision with the twenty-four elders. So, there we are, falling before our Lord and Savior and worshiping Him who lives forever and ever. Jesus died for us to save us from our sins, and rose again to secure eternal life for us, and **Jesus lives!** He lives forever and ever. And that is the truth that the devil and the world cannot take away from us, “**I know that my Redeemer Lives!**” Praise His glorious name!

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)