

#1770
Cf. #1116

Revelation 5:6-14¹
Jesus' Names of Wondrous Love –
The Lamb
Maundy Thursday
Supplementary Lectionary Series “B,”
Gospels

Pastor A. J. Kunde
Grace WELS Durand MI
7:00 p.m., Thursday,
March 28, 2013
Holy Communion

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, 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 incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ 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.
¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom
and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth.”

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

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

¹⁴ The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

¹ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

JESUS IS THE LAMB OF GOD
I. ONCE SLAIN FOR SINNERS
II. NOW SERVED BY CREATION

In the Name of Jesus, the Lamb of God who has taken away the sins of the world, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

1
I am Jesus Little Lamb;
Ever glad at heart I am.
For my Shepherd gently guides me,
Knows my needs and well provides me,
Loves me every day the same,
Even calls me by my name.

2
Day by day, at home, away,
Jesus is my staff and stay.
When I hunger, Jesus feeds me,
Into pleasant pastures leads me;
When I thirst he bids me go
Where the quiet waters flow.

3
Who so happy as I am,
Even now the Shepherd's Lamb?
And when my short life is ended,
By his angel hosts attended,
He shall fold me to his breast,
There within his arms to rest.

(CW 432 "I Am Jesus' Little Lamb")

Little ones and even adults are attracted to lambs. Through faith in Jesus, all of us are lambs in his sheepfold of believers. This evening we take a look at Jesus, who is the Lamb of God, who has taken away the sins of the world. This is one of Jesus' Wondrous Names: "The Lamb." JESUS IS THE LAMB OF GOD ... I. ONCE SLAIN FOR SINNERS ... II. NOW SERVED BY CREATION

JESUS IS THE LAMB OF GOD
I. ONCE SLAIN FOR SINNERS

Listen again to the beginning of our text. John writes, "Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the [twenty-four] elders" (5:6a; cf. 4:4,10). There is no question as to who this Lamb once slain is; it is Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Jesus is standing in the center of a throne, and this throne has a circle around it composed of four living creatures representing all created things. In the previous chapter, these living creatures were described as follows: "The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle" (4:7). Another circle around that circle is that of twenty-four elders, representing believers of all

times – twelve for Old Testament believers – the twelve tribes of Israel; and twelve for New Testament believers – the twelve apostles. The number twenty-four in the Book of Revelation represents all believers of all times – the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.

The twenty-four elders encircle the four living creatures and the throne of the Lamb of God who was once slain for sinners – who has taken away the sin of the world by the sacrifice of himself on the cross. The Apostle Peter points to this truth when he writes, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed ... but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:18,19).

This Lamb who had been slain is described as having “seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (5:6b). The number seven represents a complete number. The horns represent strength; the Lamb of God is complete in strength; he is almighty - omnipotent. The eyes represent omnipresence; the Lamb of God sees all things and knows all things. This Lamb now comes forward and takes the scroll from the hand of the heavenly Father.

No one had been worthy to take this scroll; only the Lamb of God is worthy do this. The Lamb is also worthy and able to unlock the seven seals on the scroll – each opened seal reveals what will happen and what is happening in the world before the end comes. When the Lamb takes the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders – the Church – fall down before him and worship.

All creation worships this Lamb of God. The reason is given in one of the songs they sing: “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” (5:9). This is what the Lamb accomplished by giving his life and pouring out his blood on the cross. Jesus, the Lamb of God once slain, has taken away the sins of the world.

APPROPRIATION

Jesus is the Lamb of God who has taken away the sin of the world. Is he also your Lamb? ... and yours? ... and yours? ... and mine? What does this Lamb of God once slain for sinners mean to us?

Jesus, the Lamb of God once slain, means that he is our Redeemer. Jesus is our Redeemer who paid out the Ransom price for our sins of thought, word, action, attitude and behavior. Jesus paid the Ransom price for our sinful nature – our being sinful from the time we were conceived (cf. Psalm 51:5). The reason that we need a ransom paid for us, is that without a ransom, we are doomed to death.

St. Paul writes, “sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). The “one man” through whom sin entered the world is Adam – and Eve – in the Garden of Eden, who, of their

own free will, disobeyed God's command. They brought sin into the world, and all mankind since then have been conceived and born in sin. The result of sin is death – as St. Paul points out – “death came to all men, because all sinned.” This death is not just temporal, physical death, but eternal, never-ending death in the suffering of hell. From this you and I need to be ransomed – redeemed. Jesus our Lamb of God accomplished this redemption – by being slain for us – in our place, as our substitute. This evening, we have a remembrance of Jesus' redeeming work in Holy Communion.

In Holy Communion – the Sacrament of the Altar – you and I receive the forgiveness of sins through the true body and true blood of our Savior, Jesus, the Lamb of God. In, with and under the bread, we also receive Christ's real body once slain for us. In, with and under the wine, we also receive Christ's real blood once poured out for us. These are given to you and to me as the New Covenant of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus – the Lamb of God once slain for the sins of all. Thus, we join all creation in singing the praise of Jesus, our Lamb of God.

We join creation in singing the praise of Jesus, our Lamb of God once slain for us but now living.
For,

JESUS IS THE LAMB OF GOD
I. ONCE SLAIN FOR SINNERS; and,
II. NOW SERVED BY CREATION

Jesus, the Lamb of God once slain but now living is served by all creatures, by angels, and especially by believers.

Jesus is served by all angels. Listen to what John writes,

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang:

***“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!” (5:11-12).***

Before it was noted that the Lamb was standing on a throne in the center. A circle around the Lamb was composed of four living creatures, representing all creation. A circle around that circle was composed of twenty-four elders, representing all believers in Jesus – the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints. Now a final circle around all of that is composed of angels – “thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand” – in other words, these angels are so numerous it is impossible to count them all. These angels sing a song (put to music, by the way, by George Fredrick

Handel in his “Messiah”): “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and blessing!” But these angels are not alone in serving the Lamb with their praise.

The four living creatures also serve the Lamb with their praise. John records their song in which the twenty-four elders – the Church – also join. This song, John describes as “a new song” (5:9a). They sing,

***“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”*** (5:9b).

“In the Old Testament, a new song celebrated a new act of divine deliverance or blessing, always referring to the salvation God is preparing for his people.”² Here the “new song” refers to the ransom Jesus, the Lamb of God, paid for all mankind – “from every tribe and language and people and nation.” Now we come to the service rendered especially by the twenty-four elders.

Remember that the twenty-four elders represent all believers in Jesus – the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints. In addition to the new song these elders sang with the four living creatures, there is an added thought. The Lamb once slain “made them to be a Kingdom and Priests” (5:10a). The twenty-four elders – the Church – are “a Kingdom,” for by faith in Jesus they inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. They also are “Priests” who serve “our God.” The words “to serve” our God are not in the Greek; but that is the correct understanding, for “Priests” do serve God. How?

We are told that each of these twenty-four elder-priests have a harp in their hands and “were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (cf. 5:8b). The harps they are holding, accompany their singing of praise to the Lamb of God once slain. The incense represents the prayers of the saints – believers in Jesus. (We used this image this evening in our Service of Evening Praise, when we sing, “Let my prayer rise before you as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”³ All believers in Jesus – represented again by the twenty-four elders – join in singing the final song of our text – a song sung by all creation:

² Hoerber, Robert G., *Concordia Self-Study Bible*, (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House) 1998, c1984.

³ *Christian Worship – A Lutheran Hymnal – Authorized by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993), p. 55.

***“To him who sits on the throne
and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory
and power, for ever and ever!” (5:13b).***

As all creation sings this song, “The four living creatures [say], ‘Amen,’ and the elders [fall] down and [worship]” (5:14).

APPLICATION

Our LORD Jesus, the Lamb of God once slain for us, is served by us – by you and me. We serve him in our worship, songs and praises. St. Paul writes to the Colossians, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:15). We serve our LORD Jesus as we continue in his Word and Sacraments – in which Jesus really serves us. We serve our LORD Jesus as we direct our prayers to him – prayers which ascend into heaven like fragrant incense. We also serve our LORD Jesus as we testify concerning him to others.

The Apostle Peter wrote, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). Declaring God’s praises and the praises of our Lamb of God, Jesus, who has taken away the sins of the world, does not happen only in worship, Bible study, and devotions. It takes place also as we declare to others that Jesus is their Lamb of God and the only One through whom they and we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. This is what Jesus himself declared, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

CONCLUSION

Jesus is our Lamb of God once slain for us and for all people. Through Jesus, we and all people have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. That forgiveness and life is enjoyed, however, only by faith in Jesus – no one comes to the Father in heaven except through Jesus (cf. John 14:6).

By God’s grace, you and I have been brought to faith in Jesus. Let us also speak to others the message of Jesus, the Lamb of God slaughtered once for all. Through that message, the Gospel, the Holy Spirit will work faith in Jesus in people. Amen.