

Let Us Rejoice and Be Glad

✦ **God’s judgments are true and just. (vv.1-5)**

✦ **The wedding of the Lamb has come. (vv.6-9)**

In the Name of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, dear bride of Christ:

Ever had a pain in the neck – in a good way? Flying back from the Pacific Northwest this week I kept my neck turned for fascinating conversation. Near the window was young woman we’ll call Suzie, a PhD student in neurology. She explained how we really don’t know the cause or cure of nerve disease. We observe, experiment – that’s it. Between us was an outdoor guide / nutritionist / survivalist, we’ll call Sam. Strangers to me and each other, about the age of my grown children, both asked about my work. Hearing of missionaries in Asia whose life expectancy in the 1800’s averaged about two years, Suzie asked, “Would you really do that if you had a 50/50 chance of dying?” So I said a silent prayer.

Time for God’s message of law and gospel, sin and grace. I answered kindly, “If you are convinced there really is a heaven and a hell...” Sam interjected, “You can’t have the one without the other.” “Yes, and if you believe God sent His Son to pay the entire debt, wouldn’t you want to tell everyone no matter what the cost?” The captain interrupted with news of our descent.

We sow the seeds of God’s Word as He gives opportunity. Last week Pastor Leech preached, “**And the books were opened....**” (Daniel 7:9,10). This week Jesus says in our Gospel, “**And the door was shut.**” (Matthew 25:10) This Word of God from the last book of the Bible, Revelation, shows what happens for those inside heaven’s door. Listen with John to “**the roar of a great multitude in heaven....**”

✦ **God’s judgments are true and just. (vv.1-5)**

In all the New Testament this Hebrew word is only found here. In heaven they were shouting, “**Hallelujah! – Praise the Lord!**” After a hard fought fight, no one can stop cheering the Champion. Three reasons for Father, Son and Holy Spirit: “**Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,**” the God of the Bible who reveals Himself as Triune – three persons in one God. He invented *salvation* because He is the only Source of relief from this world of sorrow, pain and suffering. God has the *glory* to earn salvation as He wills for all. No one can oppose God because He has the *power* to raise everyone from the dead – those who love Him and those who hate Him. Whether they were buried, burned or had their ashes scattered in space. He who made the molecules has the power to gather them.

The *great multitude* keeps shouting, “**Hallelujah!**” because “**true and just are his judgments.**” God does not lie. When He says that I am a wretched sinner who deserves eternal damnation for my sins of thought, word and deed, I answer, “Yes, Lord. You have every right to condemn me eternally in hell for my unholiness.” I accept the bad news because I’m so grateful for the Good News: “**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**” (John 3:16 NIV84) And I say, “Yes, Lord! You are merciful too.” God says He took our punishment on Himself. With that debt paid God’s justice is now on our side. He blesses us for keeping all His holy laws because He credits Christ’s righteousness to us by faith. “**Hallelujah!**”

So often here it looks like plain, pure Christianity is losing. Humble Christians suffer for believing in Christ alone. But God says, “Wait. I’ll take care of it.” And the multitudes in heaven praise God that “**He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged the blood of his servants.**” For two chapters the Holy Spirit has been identifying this “*woman*

sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.” He reveals that this *beast* is secular humanism in government that opposes God instead of serving as His representative. The apostate church that teaches people are saved by works and not by grace through faith in Christ alone gets in bed with government and persecutes all who follow Scripture alone. **“They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”** (Revelation 17:3,14)

And again they shouted: “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.” The eternal fires of hell never stop burning for those who reject Christ by trusting in human works and merits instead of His righteousness. Representing the Old and New Testament believers in Jesus, **the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: “Amen, Hallelujah!” Then a voice came from the throne, saying: “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!”** Jesus once said, **“Fear not those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”** (Matthew 10:28 TPA) Fearing family, friends or church more than God is deadly for eternity.

Last spring with a group of loved ones in Saint Peter’s Basilica, Rome, I commented it was built with indulgence money that sparked the German Lutheran Reformation. Our guide who told us she was raised in nonreligious family excitedly handed me the mic. “Would you say more about that? It’s a good point.” Some of our loved ones belong to that church. So I said a prayer to speak the truth in love. “Look at all this beautiful marble and gold,” I said. “So many pictures of popes and statues of saints. Here and there a little cross of Jesus. What’s wrong with this picture?” God’s people know. They agreed and one asked more about that later. Jesus deserves all the praise. Christ and Christ alone.

✦ **The wedding of the Lamb has come. (vv.6-9)**

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the declarations of ‘Not Guilty!’ on the saints.)” (TPA) At this wedding no one can keep from cheering. God and His people vindicated!

Little kids can understand the fun at weddings too. But here Jesus is the Bridegroom and everyone who believes in Him all together are His bride the Church. The happiness we had on earth amid pain and suffering has been replaced by an overflowing joy, fully informed of God’s grace and goodness forever. The bride of Christ does not earn His love. She receives as a gift the **“fine linen, bright and clean...given her to wear.”** 700 B.C. the prophet said, **“I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.** (Isaiah 61:10 NIV84) As you hear God’s Word and receive Christ’s body and blood in the blessed sacrament, you are preparing for that day, putting on Christ by faith, adorning your life with good works.

God is calling you today because **“these are the true words of God.”** You are **“blessed”** believing them for time and eternity. Prepare yourself day and night. Driving icy roads 2000’ down from my sister’s home to the bridge over the Columbia, my brother-in-law’s truck slipped. He calmly steered into the hill to stop. But the left front tire dropped and in slow motion we tipped over onto the driver’s side. It could have been a drop-off instead of a hill. Gas could have exploded. God sent another truck right behind to pull us back upright. And we are blessed with wintertime delight in God’s Word. Christ is the Captain on the loud speaker. **“Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!”** **Let Us Rejoice and Be Glad! Amen.**

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