



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

The Fourth Sunday of Easter – Revelation 7:9-17

Focus: *The resurrected Christ – The Lamb will be our Shepherd*

word of life

“They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 7:16-17 (NRSV)

Read Revelation 7:9-17

CHRIST IS RISEN! CHRIST IS RISEN INDEED!

The Easter celebration continues as we turn again to the book of The Revelation to John. In last week’s reading, the vision of John focused on the Lamb that was slain – the crucified and risen Christ – as the victorious one. It is a victory won through sacrifice. It is the Lamb alone, and not any earthly emperor or power, who is worthy of praise. The verses assigned for today shift the focus to the saving effect of the Lamb for the community of the faithful – a community that is undergoing persecution, tribulation and martyrdom.

1. *How would you define “the community of the faithful”?*
2. *What difference do you think it makes to a community experiencing tribulation to proclaim that the Lamb is the victorious one?*

The seer John witnesses “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages ...” (Revelation 7:9 NRSV) With a few simple words, the broad expanse of God’s salvation is seen. All tribes and peoples and languages, all dressed in white, all were waving palm branches and crying out in a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Revelation 7:10 NRSV) God’s saving power is not limited to one people or nation, but it is all-inclusive.

3. *How have you heard heaven described? Who do you think will be there?*
4. *On what do you base your answer?*

The multitude’s attire and actions are significant. White robes symbolize victory, purity, and heavenly existence; and waving palm branches is an action done to salute a king or victor. (See John 12:13.) Their song of worship and praise is echoed by all the heavenly hosts with a chorus of resounding “Amen.” This is clearly a vision of a great victory celebration.

The seer is then asked the identity of the white-robed multitude. The answer is given, “These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:14 NRSV) In this answer we see the purpose of Revelation. To a community facing persecution, oppression, death, suffering, and ordeals that seem too great to bear; to all whose faith has been tested, there is comfort and hope. Those whose words and actions are a witness to the resurrection will in the end witness the risen, victorious Lamb. All who suffer, all who hunger and thirst, all experiencing the heat of the day, will know relief. In a profound paradox, the Lamb becomes the shepherd who will guide the flock to “springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Revelation 7:17 NRSV) We hear echoes of the psalm for today: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want ... he leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.” (Psalm 23 NRSV) Such a shepherd is worthy of all praise and adoration!

5. *What does it mean to say “the Lamb becomes the shepherd?” In what ways is this a comfort?*

word among us

Sophie had seen many hardships in her long life. The death of her husband, the loss of a young child, a body racked with pain and maladies, a life of poverty—she had known much suffering. Yet through it all, she remained resolute in her faith. Her life was a witness to the risen Christ. No matter how difficult the circumstances, her words never wavered. “God is good ... all the time,” she was known to say.

When asked how she could be so hope-filled in the midst of so much hardship, sorrow, and loss, she would confidently say, “I’m standing on the promises of the Lamb; and I know one day, I will see my Jesus. Ooh, what a day that will be!” Her face would beam at the thought. That day came in her 90th year of earthly life. Her faith was constant to the end.

1. *Do you know someone like Sophie? Describe him/her.*
2. *What do you rely on to get through trials and tribulation?*

We can rest assured that Sophie is numbered as one of the multitude John envisioned, dressed in white robes, waving palm branches, singing praise to the Lamb, and held in the arms of her Jesus. It’s a vision that gives strength to face the trials and tribulations of life. It’s a promise that gives strength to face death—our own and those we love—knowing that one day, we will see Jesus. “The Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes,” the words of Revelation proclaim. (Revelation 7:17 NRSV) To such good news, we can only respond echoing the heavenly host, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” (Revelation 7:12 NRSV)

3. *On what occasions have you heard these verses read?*
4. *Some might say that these verses are “pie-in-the-sky, by-and-by, when I die” and don’t connect with present-day suffering. How would you respond?*
5. *Reflect on the words as someone reads the hymn “Behold the Host Arrayed in White” (#425, Evangelical Lutheran Worship or #314, Lutheran Book of Worship).*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God’s faithful people

“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints....” We confess our faith as we speak these words of the Apostle’s Creed. We speak these words when we baptize, and another is added to the multitude of the faithful and is dressed in the robe of righteousness. In our baptism, we are made a member of the communion of saints, joined with the saints of all times and all places. We are called to live among God’s faithful people, bearing witness to the one who is Lamb and Shepherd.

6. *What images come to mind when you hear the phrase, “the communion of saints?”*

Prayer

O risen Lamb, you promise to be with us in our time of suffering and tribulation. Help us trust in your promises, knowing that one day, we will join in endless praise of you, the Lamb, our Shepherd, Jesus, the risen Lord. Amen

last word

Give thanks for saints in your life
whose lives bear witness to the risen Lord.
Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!