

Easter 3C 01 May 2022
Revelation 5:[10],11-14
St Peter's Lutheran Church Elizabeth
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Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Amen.

"You have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth." This one line sung by the ancients around the throne of God, arouses 'every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, to sing with full voice.' Let's consider these three things today: 1. What Christ has done and made us. 2. The honour Christ has bestowed on us. 3. The world's future. Let's pray:

1. What Christ has done and made us.

The multitudes standing before the throne of God sing of the slaughtered Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, who took the scroll and broke the seals. Heaven sings, "blessing and honour and glory and might to the Lamb who is worthy."

The heavenly beings don't praise or glorify themselves; they don't talk about their own free-will or their own might. They ascribe their salvation to God. The Lamb has made them what they are. Their glory was bequeathed to them by the dying Lamb. The gold of their harps was dug from the mines of the agony and bitterness of Jesus' crucifixion; each string, the sinew of his body. And their robes were washed white in the blood drawn from Immanuel's veins. [Today, Kjel's name joins this heavenly throng].

Saints, you who are baptised and believe are likewise justified and have the full assurance that your sins are hidden by Christ's obedience and his precious blood. There's not one sin recorded against you in God's book; they've all been obliterated forever by the blood of Christ and cancelled by his own right hand. You have nothing to fear; you can't be condemned. Justification from beginning to end, is of God. Salvation is of the Lord alone.

And, while in this mortal coil, you are sanctified, but not perfectly sanctified yet; you're not redeemed altogether from earthly dross; the law of your flesh still battles against the freedom won by Christ. Your sanctification will only be completed/perfected when you stand before God's throne where all imperfections will be taken away, and the corruptions of your flesh transformed.

Still, beloved saints, you are growing in grace; you are making progress in holiness. Christ has done all things necessary, and to his name be honour, glory, praise, and dominion. Furthermore, he made us kings (and queens) and priests when he signed the covenant of grace. Before God established anything, the Magna Charta of the saints was written by God's own hand, and it needed one signature to make it valid. The requirement in that covenant was that the Mediator should become incarnate, live a life of suffering, and at last endure a death of humiliation. And it needed one signature, the signature of the Son of God, to make that covenant valid and eternal. My imagination pictures Jesus grasping a quill and signing the sacred treaty with the name above all names, "THE SON!", and our heavenly Father stamping it with his great seal; his glorious covenant forever secured!

2. The honour Christ has bestowed on us.

"You have made them to be a kingdom and priests." Saints, you are honoured not with one title, but two. Not only a king, but a priest also. The saint has two offices conferred at once, a priestly monarch, and a regal priest.

You aren't merely to be kings in heaven; you're already kings on earth: 'You are a chosen race, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, God's own people' (1 Peter 2:9). You're kings even now. I want you to understand that. Every saint of the living God doesn't merely enjoy the prospect of being a king in heaven, but is a king here on earth, now, in the sight of God. A Christian is a king. He's not simply like a king, but he is actually and truly a king.

How? You're descended from the King of kings. Saints, exult in your ancestry, for you are children of God. Your mother is the Church, the Bride of Jesus; you are twice-born children of heaven: blood royal of the universe. The poorest woman or man on earth who loves Christ, is of his royal line. Give a person the

grace of God in their heart, and their ancestry is noble. You can roll back through your pedigree and say that it's so ancient, it has no beginning. It's more ancient than all the rolls of the mighty put together; because from all eternity your Father existed.

And saints, you also have a splendid retinue. Kings and monarchs can't travel without all the etceteras of pomp and ceremony. Likewise, you, whom Jesus Christ has made kings and priests also have a royal retinue. If you had eyes to see, you'd perceive a bodyguard of angels perpetually attending every one of the blood-bought family. When you were born, angels stood to announce your birth on high. In the stormy seas of troubled life, when wave after wave threatens to engulf you, angels are there to lift up your head. When you die and are carried to the grave, angels will flank your coffin; and, when lowered into the grave, a mighty angel will guard your dust and defend it from the devil. Why should you fear? A company of angels escort you wherever you go, and while others may not see them, you do, 'for faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen' (Hebrews 11:3). [For what else drew Kjel to Jesus, but this conviction?]

We must add to this, your insignia and regalia. For instance, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, has Buckingham Palace, her royal crown, her sceptre, and so on. Saints, you have palaces too! With walls made of gold; borders adorned with jasper, sapphire, emerald, and other precious gems; windows of pure gold, transparent as glass; gates of pearl (Revelation 21). They stand on the hills of heaven. And each of you has a crown of righteousness engraved with these words: "Made for a sinner saved by grace – (with your own name on it)." You are indeed kings before God with crowns, robes of whiteness, and harps of glory laid up in heaven.

Yet, like all kings, you will endure sorrows. 'It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink' (Proverbs 31:4). Saints, you enjoy only a morsel of wine now; a little of the world's delights, but you'll have insurmountable joy when you drink it new in your Father's kingdom. Saints, dwell on this. You are kings! I implore you to keep this in mind and rejoice in it even in the midst of tribulation. If you have to go through the dark tunnel of ridicule for Christ's name; if you are mocked and reviled, rejoice in this fact: You are kings, and all the dominions of the earth will be yours!

And priests! You were called, elected, and ordained to it from the foundation of the world. Every saint of the Lord is a priest at God's altar, and is bound to worship God with prayer and praise. You are priests divinely constituted and called by divine grace, and as priests, you enjoy divine honours. Saints of Jesus, heirs of heaven, you have high and honourable privileges that the world can only scoff at. Think about this - only a priest may enter within the veil. Have you ever been within the veil in communion with Christ? Have you ever been in the court of the Lord's house, the court of the priests, where he has taught you, and manifested himself to you in body and blood? Yes! You know that you enjoy constant access to God's throne. You have a right to speak your griefs and sorrows directly into God's ear. The worldly, the poor children of wrath have no God to tell their troubles to. They're not permitted within the veil because they reject Jesus. But you may come to God's ear, swing incense before the throne, and offer your petitions in the name of Jesus. Saints, you are divinely honoured and divinely blessed kings and priests.

3. The world's future.

"And they will reign on earth." There is little I dare say about this as I'm not permitted to say more than God has revealed in Holy Scripture. Many treat John's Revelation like divine tea leaves that can be interpreted by mortals. I'm wary of such antics. I've read so many different views about it that they've become a casserole of phantasmagoria that gives me indigestion. I don't pretend to be a cartographer of future events. I simply believe all the Bible says of a glorious future where the saints will one day reign on the earth. And I believe it because Christ died to make it so.

For now, I know we don't reign visibly; often we're mocked. But the hour is coming when, instead of being dishonoured, you'll be honoured. You, saints, will reign. The kingdom of Christ will have the upper hand. It won't be cast down. The world will cease to be Satan's playground. The earth will sing in harmony with all of creation, an unending song of praise to the ever-glorious God. To him be all glory, and honour, and praise. Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.