

**THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER    April 6, 9 & 10, 2005**  
**St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI 53094**

**THERE IS A NEW SONG!    Revelation 5:9-14**

What does the future hold for me? Have you ever wandered where you will be and what you will be doing in another five or ten years? There are many people who will faithfully read their horoscopes, contact fortune tellers and go to tarot readings to find out what's in store for them. But you won't find the future from the devil, the Father of lies, and from his followers.

I was once talking with someone about a choice that person had to make in their life. Should they proceed with a certain medical procedure or should they not. These choices are not easy and we don't know what the outcome will be. It may help and then again it may not. You can't say one choice is right and the other is wrong. You need to ask for God's guidance and help to make a choice and then proceed knowing that the Lord will bless your decision.

In Revelation chapter 5 we have a situation regarding what the future holds. John sees God the Father holding a scroll with writing on both sides sealed with seven seals and he heard an angel say, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals." (Revelation 5:2b) John tells us that there was no one on the earth, in heaven or under the earth who was worthy to open the book. We find John weeping because there is no one who is worthy to open the book. However, one of the elders comes to him and tells him that the Lion of Judah, the Root of David has won the victory and is able to open the book. The Lion of Judah and the Root of David is Jesus Christ. Now what is in this book? We are told that this book reveals the future, what is to be. The Lamb then takes the book and in the following chapters he opens the seals and reveals what is to be until the end of time. That's what you read about in Revelation chapters 6 and 8. The elders now sing a new song of praise and honor to the Lamb, our Living Savior Jesus. John writes, **THERE IS A NEW SONG!** As we listen to that new song it gives us encouragement and confidence as we personally face the future on our journey to eternity with Jesus in glory. There are three parts to this song as we examine it.

**PART ONE – The Song of the Elders**

In the first part we hear the elders and possibly the four living creatures singing antiphonally. The elders sing one verse and then the four living ones, possibly cherubim, respond. We hear the elders sing to the Lamb, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased us for God from every tribe and language and people and nation." It appears that the four living ones respond, "You made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:9-10) Remember that this letter is being written to Christians in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey, who are being oppressed and persecuted. This was not a good time in the history of the Christian Church. Just as this

is not a good time for Christians in our nation as we are experiencing more and more open opposition and persecution of the truth of God's Word. We also see the trials and difficulties that our church body is experiencing as we call missionaries home from foreign fields because of a lack of funds, just as we have had to cut our staff because of finances even though we are living in some of the most prosperous times in history. Even in the face of persecution and difficulties and hardships we are told what great things the Lamb has done for us and what he has made each of us.

What has the Lamb done for us? He has purchased us for God through his slaughter and blood. We had been slaves to the devil and sin. But we have been set free. By his death and the shedding of his blood, Jesus has rescued each of us for God. We no longer are slaves of the devil. We belong to our God who made us. The Lamb has purchased people from all tribes, languages peoples and nations. We can see that in our own congregation. We have people here who speak Portuguese, Arabic, Spanish, German and English. We have members of our own congregation who have come from Germany, Mexico, Iraq, Brazil, and the United States of America. We see what those elders are singing about right before our own eyes here in Watertown, Wisconsin.

What the Lamb has made of us is exciting and encouraging. The four living ones sing, "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on the earth." (v. 10) We are a kingdom. We are the kingdom of God. Just as Adam and Eve were given rule over all creation before the fall into sin. So that rule is now returned and given to us. For Jesus rules as our risen and ascended Lord and King and we share that rule with him through faith in him as our Savior and Lord. We are his brothers and sisters. This is a new song. Since the fall into sin mankind lost his rule over creation. Now that rule is restored to those who follow and trust in Jesus. This is a rule that we now enjoy on this earth as followers of Jesus Christ. How are we reigning right now? Doesn't it appear that the Christian church is persecuted and declining rather than ruling? We walk by faith not by sight. We are kings and priests because our God says so and he has made us just that. The singers tell us of another exciting thing that has happened. We have been made priests. We have direct access to God through Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament believers had to go through the priest to offer their sacrifices to God. That is no longer necessary. Every one of us has direct access to our Creator through our living Savior Jesus. Peter expresses this same truth when he writes, "But 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) The living Savior rules and so do we with him. That is a reason for singing and rejoicing. Our status before our God has changed and our eternal future has been secured.

## **Part Two – The Song of the Angels**

John now goes on to describe for us what he heard and saw next. That must have been something that was just amazing and mind boggling. He writes, "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. 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." (Vv. 11-12) It is interesting to note that this song of praise has seven words of praise. The number seven is significant in the book of Revelation. It is the sum of the number 3, the number for God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) plus the number 4, the number for this world ( the four corners of the earth – north, south, east and west) and also used in reference to every tribe, language, people and nation. This use of seven words of praise may signify that God and the world have been reconciled through the work of the Lamb. As we look at the various words that the angels use to describe what the Lamb now receives, it reminds us of the victory that Jesus won. Just before our Savior ascended into heaven 40 days after his resurrection from the grave he told his followers, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me." (Matthew 28:18) The angels sing that the Lamb is worthy to receive all power and strength. He also receives all riches. Remember the Bible tells us that Jesus became poor for us so that we might be rich. He emptied himself and left his throne in glory to become a servant to rescue all of us. He now has received all the riches and wealth of heaven. He also has all wisdom. While on this earth Jesus did not always make use of his divine omniscience. Now he makes use of all wisdom. He also now has all glory, honor and praise. While on this earth he experienced rejection, ridicule and scorn, but now as our victorious and living Savior he receives the glory, praise and honor that is due him. For people who are into basketball the month of March is a great time and there is much celebration and lots of emotion. Just think of the celebration and emotion that there is in heaven and should be here among us because of the victory that Jesus won by rising from the dead.

### **Part Three – The Song of all Creation**

The song is just about over and John now hears all creation ascribe praise and blessing not only to the Lamb but also to the one who sits on the throne, our Holy Father and Creator God. John writes, "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 forever and ever!'" (V.13) All power, glory, praise and honor belongs to our God and to Lamb. This is not something that we give to a human being. This is what our loving Creator and Savior is to receive. This hymn is being sung by the saints in heaven as well as the saints here on this earth.

What a sight that must have been and what an encouragement for John who was in exile on the Island of Patmos. What encouragement this was for the people that this letter was originally sent to. These were people who were persecuted and did not know if the church would continue to exist and if they would continue to live. What a comfort it is for you and me when we become discouraged and uncertain about the future and what it holds for us. Our Risen Savior is in charge of this world and everything – absolutely everything that is happening in our own personal lives and in this world is going to work for the good of the people of God and the kingdom of Christ. This is a new song. This is a song that fills every one of us with confidence and true hope. Amen.