

Friday, January 26, 2018

Blessed

Revelation 13-14

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." Revelation 14:13

A beatitude finds its way into the narrative. This is the second of seven beatitudes in the Revelation. It is an encouragement to those who will die in the Lord. It is preceded by a call to remain faithful to Jesus and patient in their endurance (verse 12). Those who die in the Lord will be blessed. The Spirit affirms what has been spoken, promising rest from their labor as their deeds follow them. To die in the Lord means not only to die as one saved by grace, but also to have that faith proven genuine by deeds done in labor to the Lord, knowing that the labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). In some way, labor here allows for rest to come. I long to be blessed by God, but what shape does that take in my life? It occurs to me that this is a blessing I would like to take hold of! It is a blessing affirmed by the Spirit of eternal rest. It helps me realize the time for rest is yet to come—the time for labor is here and now. May my faith reveal itself in deeds done for the glory of my Lord.

Dear God, I am grateful beyond words for the blessings You have brought into my life. They are more numerous than I can even imagine. I look forward to the future rest and blessing that You have for me and for all those who endure. Find me faithful! Amen.

January 22 - 27, 2018

Saturday, January 27, 2018

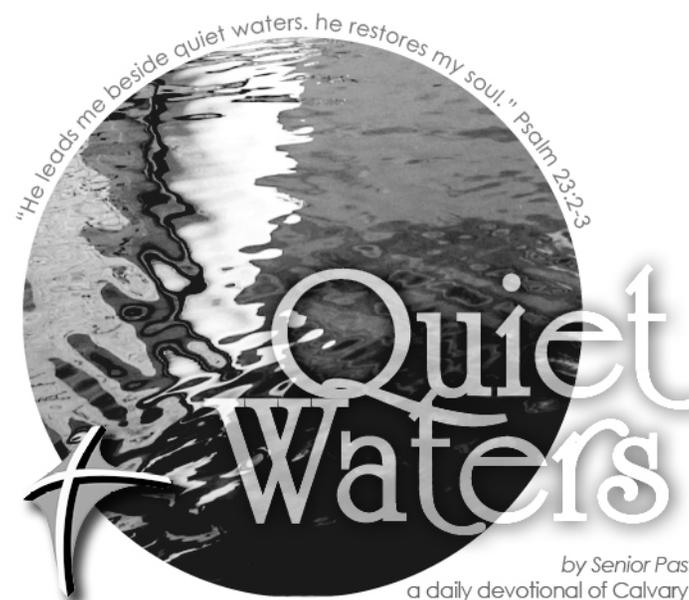
Song

Revelation 15-16

And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." Revelation 15:2-4

Once again, a song of praise and adoration to the sovereignty of God breaks out in heaven as the scene changes to the plagues. Those singing the song are the ones who were martyred by the beast in the tribulation. But notice that the description John records for us is not that of defeat, but of victory (15:2). What seemed to be defeat (martyrdom) actually was victory over the beast. Their faith to stand and not deny Christ actually gave them the victory! This song harkens us back to Exodus 15 and Psalm 86 and calls me to remember that God is the King of ages—the eternal King who will reveal his righteous acts, the pouring out of his wrath. This is a chorus of the nations. I try to imagine the sound of the harps and the voices mixed in joyful celebration—Jews and Gentiles together as one, singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. This is a choir I will love to join. I look forward to the day my voice mixes with theirs in praise to my Great Savior and Lord.

Dear Lord, I love that You show us a chorus of the nations all singing together to praise You and Your marvelous name. I look forward to that day when I sing in Your presence in the heavenly chorus! Amen.



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, January 22, 2018

Sacrifice

Revelation 5-6

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed. Revelation 6:9-11

In Romans 12:1 Paul calls his readers to offer themselves as living sacrifices. In these verses, a glimpse of true sacrifice is given. These are souls under the altar, martyred for their testimony. They were slain on earth but we see in this text that the true sacrifice they offer is in heaven, under the altar, which perhaps recalls the place where priests would pour the blood of their sacrifices (Lev. 4:7). The fifth seal reveals these who had been so martyred. God gives them each a white robe. These verses cause me to pause and ask myself how willing I am to offer my life as a sacrifice. These were slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. I must maintain my testimony and I must hold fast to the word of God—no matter what. Am I bold about my faith? Am I overwhelmed with a desire to share my faith verbally with whoever God brings in my path—no matter the outcome? Will I be called on to be one of these souls? It says in our text that the number of those who were to be killed for their testimony is yet to be completed. At this point in time, in this country I am free to share my faith with little fear of death. What keeps me from having the boldness of these, my brothers and sisters who have given their lives—or yet will? I am arrested in my heart to stop and pray—not just for boldness—but to intercede diligently for the persecuted church wherever it may be!

Father, please give me boldness to share my faith. I love you and those you love, but I need you to help me with my fear. How I pray for those who live in situations where speaking your name could mean death. Please keep my heart before You for my brothers and sisters who are facing death at this moment somewhere in the world because of Your word and the testimony they have maintained. May their lives and testimony speak to the lives of those who are persecuting them. Make Yourself known through their sacrifice I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

Silence

Revelation 7-8

When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Revelation 8:1

Having read this far in the Revelation of John, I have been impressed with the worship that occurs in heaven. It is worship that never stops. Day after day praises are offered to the Lord. There is a constant song that fills the air—until this moment. At this moment, when the seventh seal is opened, everything stops and silence fills the air of heaven. I can imagine it is a silence that can be felt. Worship is still happening, but it is no longer the worship of singing or praising; it is the worship of silence and awe. Zephaniah 1:7 gives a clue as to the reason for the silence. *"Be silent before the Sovereign LORD. For the day of the LORD is near."* Judgment is coming. The seal has revealed the coming of extreme judgment and all in heaven are somehow aware of this coming judgment and they are silent before the Sovereign LORD. God must judge. He is just and His justice will prevail. Justice is His and justice will be complete. The revelation of that justice will fill all heaven with silent awe. The long awaited moment is here—the moment when justice will once and for all reign. Awe is what filled the half hour of silence in heaven. Awe is what must fill my silent moments as I consider the sovereignty and justice of the one true righteous Almighty God.

Sovereign, Almighty God, I long to have this type of awe of You. Help me to embrace the truth that You will bring a final justice to all the injustice. Help me be in awe of that truth. Fill my silent moments with awe of You. Amen.

Wednesday, January 24, 2018

Unrepentant

Revelation 9-10

The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts. Revelation 9:20-21

Revelation 9:20-21 depicts in startling reality the total depravity of mankind. In the midst of describing the devastation that comes from the judgment released by the sounding of the sixth trumpet, it is important to also read the mercy that is revealed. Only one third of mankind is killed. The rest are left to respond. It is judgment that is meant to lead to repentance. That does not happen. Mankind refuses to repent, choosing instead to worship the very things that have brought the pain—idols, demons, and self-focused immorality. Mankind has so totally moved from their Creator that nothing will bring them back. I pray that you who are reading what I have written have repented of your sin. I pray that you have seen that a loving God has reached to you through Jesus Christ to offer forgiveness for the sins you have committed that have earned for you death and separation from God. I pray that you have discovered what it means to turn from worshiping idols, demons, and self-focused immorality. Lack of repentance has eternal death as its final reward. Responding to the mercy of God in repentance brings a relationship with God that is beyond anything you can imagine.

Father, help me live in repentance. Thank You for Your mercy. Amen.

Thursday, January 25, 2018

Reign

Revelation 11-12

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign." Revelation 11:15-17

God is sovereign. He is in control of all things at all times. There is no uncertainty. While Satan claimed to have authority over the earth (Luke 4:6), it has never been outside of the sovereignty of God. The last few verses of Revelation 11 find the reader once again in the worship taking place in the throne room of heaven. This worship is because the kingdom of Christ is beginning to come to the kingdom of this world. I love the praise of the elders. "You have taken your great power." God's plan continues to unfold. He is all powerful. He has the power to accomplish anything at all that He wishes to accomplish. His plan will prevail, even when it appears that it may not. The kingdom of this world many times appears to be spiraling away from God's control. Nothing could be further from the truth. God is in control and He is sovereign and His reign on earth will come when He determines the time is right. In the meantime, I pray, *"Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven!!"*

God, I know that You are sovereign and that You reign absolutely. I long for the day when Your kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven. In the meantime, help me to make Your kingdom known on earth as I reveal that You reign over me! Amen.