

Keep Your Head Up
The Lamb Is Your Shepherd

A Sermon on Revelation 7:9-17
Year C - Easter 4
8 - May - 2022

JJ¹

A beautiful, white lamb stands off in a field all by itself. It is just one year old. There isn't a blemish on it. It seems so innocent. Life seems so peaceful until a strong hand comes and leads it to the slaughtering floor. Loud bleats fill the air. The knife comes and crimson blood stains its fleece as white as snow. Quickly the life is gone.

A sheep led to the slaughter. That's how we feel sometimes because in many ways that is what we are in this life. But we are only that because of *the* Lamb who was led to the slaughter for us. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who was led to the slaughter, and yet was silent. He didn't open his mouth to try and stop what was happening. As brutal and unjust as his enemies were, Jesus willingly let his holy blood flow from his head crowned with thorns and hands and feet pierced with nails. Battered and bruised Jesus is that pure white lamb with crimson blood flowing down. And quickly, his life is gone. Yet, his life departs in words of victory: **"It is finished!"** And three days later, that victory is seen and believed by those to whom the Lamb of God appears—alive forever and ever!

Today we are again in the heavenly throne room of God. We follow John into that glorious place and hear and see the

amazing reality that the Lamb of God is also our Good Shepherd!

After these things I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing in front of the throne and of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palm branches in their hands. They called out with a loud voice and said: "Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb." All the angels stood around the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures. They fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying: "Amen. Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and might belong to our God forever and ever. Amen."

John sees this great multitude of people singing praises to God and the elder explains who they are. **"These (in white robes) are the ones who are coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."**

Friends, John sees all the believers in heaven wearing white robes washed in Jesus' blood. It was Jesus' blood that paid for the sins of the world. The white robes symbolize our purity as we stand before God as his people. What's more is that they hold palm branches of victory in

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

their hands and their eyes are unclouded by tears. They have made it through the great tribulation of life lived in a sinful world.

This, friends, is a beautiful sight for us to see when you and I are still in that **great tribulation**. We are still in the midst of all the pressures that our sinful souls and this sinful world push on us by trying to turn us away from God and satisfy our sinful cravings. We are still in the middle of the challenges to our faith brought against us by experiences that seem to say that we're losing. Like the spiritual leaders of Jesus' day who pounced on him, trying to trap him in his words, the so-called "wise" of our day try to trap us into the corner of unloving bigotry. They are those who claim we are the ones who have no love because our loves calls those caught in the sins of sexual perversion to repentance. They claim we are the ones who have no concern for women because we stand on God's righteous cause to preserve life in the womb!

Sometimes we can feel so weak and small and hopeless. As Paul said, we are indeed **considered as sheep to be slaughtered** (Rom. 8:36). As the pressure grows, tears often cloud our eyes and even our faith. We are tempted to wave a white flag of surrender rather than

proudly and confidently carry our palm branch of victory. We get tired of struggling so we are tempted to compromise our faith just so we won't be so abrasive to the world around us. We are tempted to hang our heads in shame and defeat.

So often we get the wrong picture in our heads. Every year around Memorial Day, I like to watch the miniseries *Band of Brothers*. One of episodes is called *Why We Fight*. It is the episode when members of Easy Company come across a concentration camp. It depicts the people

of the local town weeping and mourning as they were burying the rotting corpses of murdered Jews. Finally they realize what they realized they allowed to happen in their

society. Sometimes I think we as Christians imagine that we are them. That we are the ones weeping and mourning and burying our dead. That we are the scourge of the earth. That we are the defeated. That is not the case!

What I like about that episode is that it shows what was the deep darkness of Nazi Germany. At its peak, what did they think they were? They thought they were the pinnacle of the world. They thought that everything else that was not like them needed to be exterminated. If you would have been in Berlin at the peak of



it all, you would have seen that everything was great and glamorous. That they were best and wisest in the world. But they were defeated.

Friends, that is the world. That is the sinful world. That is the sinful world around us that thinks they are the great and glamorous. That they are the best and wisest in the world. That they can rule all things as they live in their sin. But your Savior Jesus proclaims to you, "No! They will all come to ruin! Their outcome will be far worse than the Nazis! They are already defeated eternally, even though it does not seem like it yet."

Friends, **KEEP YOUR HEAD UP, THE LAMB IS YOUR SHEPHERD!** Amid all the pressures and shouting voices you can hear another voice. A voice that you know. It is the voice of your Good Shepherd!

In the presence of all our enemies (Ps. 23:5) you can hear his calm voice say, **"My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand"** (Jn. 10:27-28).

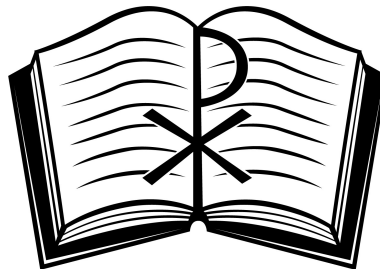
The Lamb who is your Shepherd knows. He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows your weaknesses. He knows your struggles. He knows your enemies. He knows the **great tribulation** because he lived it too! These terrors of body and soul can sometimes shake us to

the core, but Jesus calms our trembling hearts. In fact, he makes our enemies shake with fear. His enemies already tried taking him on with all they had, and they failed! They put him in the grave, but he walked away from it three days later completely unscathed by their hate. Every enemy we have, friends, both in our own hearts and in the world around us are silenced and defeated as he wraps his nail-pierced hands around us.

As the Lamb who is your Shepherd holds you tight, he assures you that you are not a helpless victim in this life, but a victor! Your hardships and heartaches that fill your eyes with tears don't own you. You are *his* sheep! You aren't going to lose not matter how hard this wicked world tries to snuff you out. No one can snatch you from his hands!

Even though you do not see it now, palm branches of victory are in your hands. Even though you do not see it now, you are already wearing your white robe of righteousness, made white by the blood of the Lamb. Even now you have the assurance that God will completely wipe away every tear from your eyes!

Friends, **KEEP YOUR HEAD UP, THE LAMB IS YOUR SHEPHERD,** and he will guide you home to be with that **great multitude that no one could count, from**



every nation, tribe, people, and language. And there you shall stand in front of the throne of God, and [you will] serve him day and night in his temple. He who sits on the throne will spread his tent over [you]. [You] will never be hungry or thirsty ever again. The sun will never beat upon [you], nor will any scorching heat, for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be [your] shepherd. He will lead [you] to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from [your] eyes. Amen.

SDG²

² SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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