

Order of Worship for May 22, 2022

Prelude

P: Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen!

C: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Hymn: “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing” - **Hymn #475**

Opening Verses:

P: This is the day which the LORD has made;

C: let us rejoice and be glad in it.

P: From the rising of the sun to its setting,

C: the name of the LORD is to be praised.

P: Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere;

C: I would rather be doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

P: Make me to know Your ways, O LORD.

C: Teach me Your paths.

P: Sanctify us in Your truth

C: Your Word is truth.

P: From the rising of the sun to its setting,

C: the name of the LORD is to be praised.

Entrance Psalm:

P: Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you;

C: He will never permit the righteous to be moved.

P: My heart is in anguish within me;

C: the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

P: But I call to God,

C: and the LORD will save me.

P: Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan,

C: and He hears my voice.

P: He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage,

C: for many are arrayed against me.

**All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you;

C: He will never permit the righteous to be moved.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day: P: O God, the giver of all that is good, by Your holy inspiration grant that we may think those things that are right and by Your merciful guiding accomplish them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Hymn of Praise: “*Blest Be the Tie That Binds*” - **Hymn #649**

First Lesson: Acts 16:9-15

R: A vision appeared to Paul in the night: A man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we

sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

R: Lord, have mercy on us.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Second Lesson: John 16:23-33

P:[Jesus said:] "In that day you will ask nothing of Me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father." His disciples said, "Ah, now You are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! Now we know that You know all things and do not need anyone to question You; this is why we believe that You came from God." Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave Me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with Me. I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

P: Lord, have mercy on us.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

Children's Message

Sermon Hymn: "*The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done*" - **Hymn #464**

Sermon "*How's It Going?*" - **Revelation 6-20**

How's it going? Check the news, and it all seems bad. War in Ukraine, the specter of nuclear war, inflation—it can look real bad.

It looks a lot like images in Revelation. As we read the book of Revelation, we can get all caught up in all the images presented in the book—four horsemen, a beast with seven heads, an army with wings a woman sitting on a dragon. This can lead to all kinds of weird beliefs. But it is important to remember what John is describing. People who talk to us about war, like those in Ukraine, can only describe it only so much. They say, "You just had to be there." The same is with people who undergo cancer treatment. John is describing things beyond our comprehension. Why is this beyond us? St. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:12:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

John is describing things beyond normal earthly existence, both spiritual goodness and evil. To see things as John intended, don't picture things in your mind. Instead listen to his words. The words, not the images we may see, are what are important. Those words are based mainly in the Old Testament.

Let me give you an example from outside of our faith. The most successful American rock band of all time is the “Eagles.” Their biggest hit was “Hotel California.” Over the years many have interpreted the song as showing they were Satanist. This would especially be seen in the words, “They stab it with their steely knives, but they just can't kill the beast.” If you try to imagine this, you think of a satanic ritual. But if you focus on the words themselves you realize the “Steely Knives” is just a playful reference to the group “Steeley Dan” who had made a playful reference in a song to the Eagles. This was a response to that.

With this we also have to understand time as John presents it. In our Western world we think of time as a line—past, present, future—in that order. But John was an Asiatic Jew, an easterner. He is writing in Revelation with a view of time as a circle. In the flag of India, you see a wheel at the center. This reflects the eastern view of time going back and forth in circles. In Revelation John uses five series of “circles” to explain the course of time. If you read Revelation with things going on one thing at a time, you get all kinds of goofy beliefs about what is going on. But with each of these circles, when John gets to the seventh one, it all starts out all over again. Each ends with God in control.

Seven is the number of God. The five cycles all have seven things which shows us that this is from God. He is control of what is going on, even when it is not something He causes, but lets happen, like He lets the devil do things, like get Jesus enemies top put Him on the cross, to accomplish His purposes. The five cycles are:

Revelation 6:1-8:1 seals

Revelation 8:2-11:18 trumpets

Revelation 11:19-15:4 signs

Revelation 15:5-16:21 bowls

Revelation 17:1-20:15 sights

The Seven Seals 6-8:1

The first cycle, the seals, begin in chapters five and six where Jesus is shown to be the only one who can open the seals. The idea is that He is in control of what happens.

The first four seals are the famous four horsemen. No, this is not talking about the Notre Dame football backfield in the 1920's, but how God allows four things to inflict suffering on the world. The white horse is conquest, the red is war, the black is economic exploitation, and the pale horse is death. This all what we have been experiencing as human and will continue to do so. “The words with the black horse say, “A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and wine!” Cheating is going on there, just as it is today.

The fifth seal shows how despite all that bad going on, God's people are protected, “sealed,” until the end of time. The sixth seal speaks about stars falling like figs and the heavens rolling up. Don't try to picture that. In the Old Testament world they viewed the sky as a dome over the land which had lights—sun, moon, and stars. That is how they could “fall” to earth and the dome could “roll up.” The point is that evil here is not earthly like the four horsemen, but spiritual. The seventh seal is opened and there is silence—as there is in the presence of God. As the Psalmist says, “The LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.” We might expect things to go on, but the seventh seal just leads into the next cycle, the trumpets.

The Seven Trumpets 8:2-11:18

The first trumpet brings hail and fire that destroys 1/3 of all plants. The 1/3 is not so much an exact amount, but saying that the damage is extensive, but not most of it. The fire reminds us of how He used that as judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah.

The second trumpet causes 1/3 of mountains to fall in the sea, 1/3 of water turned to blood, and 1/3 of sea creatures and ships destroyed. Again, don't picture things, just the words that the destruction is extensive, but not the majority. The water turned to blood calls to mind God's first plague against Egypt.

The third trumpet is "Wormwood." This is the name of an apprentice devil in C.S. Lewis' Screwtape Letters.

The fourth trumpet is 1/3 of the sun, moon, stars, days and night struck. Again, don't picture this, but hear the words that it reflects big things, but not total.

There is a pause before the last three trumpets called the "Three Woes." The first woe (5th trumpet) is a star falling to open an abyss. This points to Revelation 12 where Satan is kicked out of heaven by Michael and the Angels and falls to the ground. Then come out these creatures with gold crowns, man's faces, women's hair, lions' teeth, and wings sound like horses. Once again, do not try to picture them; hear the words that describe something grotesque, but not part of our everyday life. This is spiritual evil.

The second woe (sixth trumpet) is the 4 angels who dry up the Euphrates River. The river was at the eastern edge of Israel and is where Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians came to conquer the land. Violence and war—what we have seen since John saw this vision.

Then there is silence before the last trumpet (3rd woe). During this time the scroll is sealed to show this is certain. What God promises will happen.

The seventh trumpet sounds and we see the 24 elders, which represent the 12 tribes of Israel (the Old testament Church) and the 12 disciples (the New Testament Church) in the eternal worship of God. But leads only to the next cycle of seven, the seven signs.

The Seven Signs 11:19-15:4

The first sign is the woman and the dragon. The woman stands for the Church; the dragon is clearly identified as the devil who tries to stop her. There is a whole journey of the woman fleeing from the beast, the beast trying to drown her, and the earth sucking up the water the beast tries to use to drown her. Then she gives birth to a son. Jesus came from the Church. God protected His Church to send Jesus into the world.

Then we see for the second and third signs two beast that come from the dragon-- the beast out of the land and the beast out of the sea. In the Old Testament world the people of Israel were landlubbers. They saw the sea as evil. The beast from the sea is secular evil. The beast from the land is the evil that seems to come from within the Church, a far more subtle, deadly evil. This is identified in 1 John as the "antichrist." It is also the "man of lawlessness of 1 Thessalonians. The land beast props up the sea beast, just as the devil props up both. Spiritual evil hides behind the secular.

The fourth sign is the 144,000 and the "Great Multitude." As we heard two weeks ago these are two different ways of the describing the same group—the Church, the body of Christ. The 144, 00 shows the Church is complete, and the multitude that it is vast.

The fifth sign is the three angels who tell us to fear God, that Babylon will fall, and so will those who have the mark of the beast—those who do not have faith in Christ.

The sixth sign is the harvest of those who will perish. This is where the Battle Hymn of the Republic gets the words, "He is tramping out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored."

The seventh sign is seven angels with bowls, which will pour out plagues like those that hit Egypt in the time of Moses. This shows God's judgment on evil. Then the sea becomes as glass. Since the sea was evil to the Old Testament people, having in turn to glass shows God's power over it. Near the end of Revelation the sea disappears.

Again, there is a pause, showing there is something bigger than all of this—God.

The Seven Bowls 15:5-16:21

The bowls are poured out. The first puts sores on people. The second turns the sea to blood. The third turns fresh water into blood. The fourth is scorching by the sun. The fifth is the darkening of the beast's throne. This speaks against the pagan worship of the Sun god. The sixth bowl dries up the Euphrates so evil can come like an invader from the east. The dragon (devil), beast (secular evil), and false prophet (antichrist) are a part of this. Frogs come from them, like the plague on Egypt.

The seventh bowl shows Armageddon, a description of the end of time. "Armageddon" means Mt. Megiddo." In the Old Testament several battles were fought there. As you travel between the major trade route between the main areas of ancient civilization from Egypt to modern Iraq, you move up the coast of Israel, and then turn inland to avoid mountains. Megiddo is the pass that lets you move through that area, so it is an image of war. The final "Armageddon will not be a World War of an asteroid hitting planet earth. All of creation will be destroyed for God to make a new one. And it will be clearly God who is making this happen. We know this because of the description of islands disappearing, mountains falling down and 100 pound hailstones.

The Seven Sights 17:1-20:15

This leads to the final cycle of seven sights. It is like we start all over again. The first sight is the woman on the beast. This is not the woman earlier who represents the Church. She lies on the beast—she is allied to it.

The second sight is Babylon. This city represented evil in the Old Testament since the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and took the people of God into exile. At the time of Revelation it is a symbol of Rome, which was beginning to persecute the Church.

The third sight is the multitude praising God.

The fourth sight is Jesus on a white horse conquering with His sword.

The fifth sight is the 1,000 year period, the so called Millennium. If we look at this as 1,000 years of definite time, we get all mixed up. The Millennium is not some future time when people who didn't come to Christ can be converted. It is now, the time when Jesus rule through His Church on earth. If we would need a future 1,000 years to save people, then what Jesus did is not enough.

The sixth sight is the sea of fire. Fire destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. It is also a symbol for purifying.

The seventh sight is the end, finally. We saw part of the description of that week with the New Jerusalem. We will see it again next week with the tree of life.

Five cycle of sevens—on and on it seems to go. That is what we can experience in our lives. But as all that goes on, God is with us, God is in control. No matter what happens, God is with us. That moves us to get the Word out, to share our faith.

We can see this in chapter 11 where the temple is measured and the two witnesses proclaim God's message for 1260 days or 42 months. This time interval is 3 and ½ years, the time God prevented rain from coming to Israel as the prophet Elijah spoke out against evil King Ahab. It represents the Church in witness to God as two witnesses who are killed by the beast from the Abyss and ridiculed. But they rise from the dead.

This shows how again and again the Church seems to lose to evil and the world. We see fewer people coming to church. Our faith seems to have a lot less influence on our culture. But in the midst of that, God brings victory. He continues to raise up His Church in witness to the world. So how is it going? Revelation gives us the big picture. No matter how bad it seems now, God is in control. And as the temple was measured, we are too. We will not be missing in the end. We will be with God forever!

Responsive Prayer on Peace:

P: Lord God, You promise peace to those who trust in You.

C: **“Peace, peace, to those far and near,’ says the LORD. ‘And I will heal them.’**

P: But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.

C: **‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.’**”(Isaiah 57:19-21)

P: We are the wicked who do not have peace. Yet You want to bring us peace.

C: **“I will listen to what God the LORD says; He promises peace to His people, His faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly. Surely His salvation is near those who fear Him, that His glory may dwell in our land.”** (Psalm 85:8-9)

P: You sent Jesus into this as the angels proclaimed:

C: **“Glory to God in highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men.”** (Luke 2:14)

P: On Palm Sunday the people proclaimed:

C: **“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”** (Luke 19:38)

P: Jesus promised His disciples on the night before He died:

C: **“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”** (John 14:27)

P: On Easter Jesus rose to bring peace:

C: **“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ After He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.”**(John 20:19,20)

P: Help us to see:

C: **“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** (Romans 5:1)

P: Through Joseph you brought peace to him and his brothers:

C: **“‘Be at peace,’ Joseph said. ‘Don’t be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.’”** (Genesis 43:23)

P: “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.” (Colossians 3:15)

C: **“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** (Philippians 4:7)

(other petitions)

Lord’s Prayer:

Prayer for Peace:

P: O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, give to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey Your commandments and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Blessing (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: *“Christ Be My Leader”* - Hymn #861

