

## ***“The Lamb that was slain – Amen”***

Before a funeral there is often a visitation – a time for family and friends to visit with the mourning family – and also the opportunity to view the body of the deceased. In this quiet, somber time – ironically, in the midst of an uncomfortableness with death, the viewing of the body provides something to talk about.

There are comments on how the person looks – the clothes they are wearing, a familiar piece of jewelry, the Bible they are holding. But even the best mortician cannot hide the obvious – that this friend, this co-worker, this loved one ... is dead. The casket is closed, and so it seems, what little conversation there was.

After the committal service at the graveside, the family often invites the congregation to gather back at the church to share a meal with them. And this always amazes me – that this same group of people, once hushed and quiet – now talk and laugh like a family reunion. Finding words to say is no longer a problem.

Early on Easter morning there is a visitation at the tomb – and though it was an open casket (so to speak) – there was no body to view. The viewing of the body comes later – the resurrected Jesus seen by the women and His disciples – and even Thomas a week later.

The nail holes are still in His hands – and the gaping hole in His side. This wounded, crucified and risen Lord is the Jesus that Thomas sees – and worships, saying, “My Lord and my God!”

This is the same Jesus we see this morning – through the Revelation of St. John. We hear the worship of the One who sits on the throne, and the Lamb. This Lamb – who is “worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” – is Jesus. The Lamb who was slain – who still bears the marks of His crucifixion.

Some do not care for these marks – these graphic reminders of what the Son of God endured for our sake. They want their worship settings to be sterile – with no bloody corpse before their eyes – and no audible reminders that the “wages of sin is death.”

But the Lord says that “without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.” The blood of the lamb delivered the children of Israel from death in Egypt. Without the blood of Jesus – our worship is in vain. To close the lid on the crucified Christ – to put away all reminders of His death – makes one vulnerable to believing that there is some other, unbloody way of salvation.

The center of all true worship is the crucified and risen Christ – resurrecting dead-in-their-sins-Sinners. That’s the substance of Christian worship – that the very Body and Blood of Jesus Christ was given into death, and raised to life again, for your justification.

That is why the ransom price is held before our eyes – why the liturgy leads us to the Lord’s Altar and Table where Christ’s Body and Blood are given for us Christians to eat and drink. Even in our Hymn of Praise this day we sang of the Lamb – “whose blood sets us free.”

What is revealed to you today in the Revelation given to St. John is not something that lies in the future – but it is the present and eternal worship of the One who sits on the throne and the Lamb. This is not just a peek into heaven – but a revelation of what is going on here on earth – where, “with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven” we gather before the one true God to sing His praises.

Sure, from where we stand (sit), our worship doesn’t look like much – but it is! Christ Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, stands here in the midst of us – to do His Divine Service – to serve you with His forgiveness, life and salvation.

On the hills outside of Bethlehem, the shepherds stood with feet firmly planted on earth – and the glory of the Lord shone “round about them” – and suddenly the vast heavenly host appears, praising God and saying – “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men.”

Peace on earth because God has come to save His people from their sins. A Savior born – the Lamb who is to be slain – who is “worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

He is worthy to be praised – but we are not worthy to even stand in His presence. And yet, He gathers us to Himself – that by His grace, we might receive the treasures of His kingdom. That’s why we as Lutherans confess – “It is by faith that God wants to be worshipped, namely, that we receive from Him what He promises and offers.”

This very day, the Lamb of God stands with feet firmly planted on earth – and He gives to you Michaela His very own Body and Blood – “given and shed” so that you may be set free. Free from sin. Free from death. Free to sit down and feast with the whole family of God – laughing and living – and giving your “Amen” to all that is true.

Dear Christians, gathered before the throne of God this very day – united with the whole Church of God in heaven and on earth – we rejoice to confess: “Worthy is the Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood sets us free to be people of God.” Amen.

Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!