

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – March 28, 2013

Maundy Thursday **Names of Wondrous Love—THE LAMB**

Revelation 5:6-10

Why do little ones love lambs? They may not have ever seen a lamb for real or felt its soft fleece. Yet, many children have held a little stuffed lamb (like this) and perhaps they even hold it close as they fall asleep. What makes a lamb so appealing to children? What makes lambs so precious in their sight? How can we know?

A Lamb is also loved by us as God's little ones. We, as children of the heavenly Father, know why. It's because of the wondrous love that caused our Father to send his Lamb for us. It's also because of what that Lamb in equally wondrous love has done for us. On this Maundy Thursday, we will consider another name of wondrous love for our Savior - **THE LAMB**. Jesus is the Lamb slain for us and the Lamb served by us.

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John some 20 times names Jesus the Lamb. In our verses, he describes him as a Lamb *“looking as if it had been slain.”* For the apostle John, this picture was packed with meaning. It took him back some 70 years to the day when, at the Jordan River, he had witnessed his teacher, John the Baptist, pointing to Jesus. *“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* his teacher had proclaimed for all to hear (Jn 1:29). The apostle John knew what those words meant. He knew about that Passover night centuries earlier when the angel of the Lord had swept through Egypt. That angel had struck down the firstborn in every home but passed over those homes with the blood of the sacrificial lamb smeared on the doorposts. John knew too the meaning of the blood of all those lambs, hundreds of them, thousands of them, sacrificed on all the Passover celebrations since that one in Egypt. The blood of all those lambs pointed to the blood of the real Lamb, God's own Lamb, sent from heaven. His blood would be so precious that it would cancel all sin. Those covered by the blood of God's Lamb would be spared when God's eternal judgment passed over.

In our verses we hear John further describing that Lamb as *“standing in the center of the throne.”* We might expect to find a slain lamb lying lifeless in the dust. But this Lamb is standing very much alive in the middle of God's throne in heaven. He's sharing with the Father in all divine power and majesty. Moreover, He's pictured as having seven horns and seven eyes. Those horns and eyes do not make him into some unsightly, disfigured monster. Rather, the horns show his strength and the eyes his wisdom, times seven, so that we gasp in wonder at the almighty power and all-knowing wisdom of this Lamb.

What's John telling us about the Lamb? Many churches have a symbol on the altar cloth, banner, or even stained glass windows portraying this picture. It shows a Lamb stepping lively forward, holding a banner of victory. That's what John saw in heaven, not just a Lamb who himself was slain but who has slain our enemy. Not just a Lamb whose blood stained the cross on Calvary but whose blood satisfied the penalty for all sins. Not just a Lamb who went silently to the slaughter but who stepped out of the grave in victory over sin, death, and the devil.

I hope all of you have stayed with me this evening so far as I've spoken about that Lamb slain for sin as described in our verses. But really all this talk about the Lamb who was slain does us little, if any, good unless we are ready to go one step farther. I pray

each of you recognize him as the Lamb slain for ME. That's right, we need to talk about God's precious Lamb as having been slain for ME and as being MY Lamb. As someone once said, *"To say Christ died is history. To say Christ died for sinners is theology. To say Christ died for me is salvation."*

I want to ask you a question, a serious one, as we think about the seriousness of this night? After all, the Lenten season is one of those times to pause in our daily hurrying about and to do some serious soul-searching. What does the Lamb slain for sinners mean to you? As you answer look especially at the blessed meal the Lord places before us. In his Holy Supper, the Lamb himself is present to serve us. In it He offers the very body that He gave and the very blood that He poured out for your sins on Calvary's cross. With his true body and blood, He assures you of the blessed truth that He was indeed slain for you. At his altar He puts his hand on your shoulder, looks into your eyes, and reassures you individually that He was slain for you. *"Here,"* He says, *"my body, given for you. Here, my blood, shed for you. Your sins are forgiven, the ones you slip into so easily each day and the ones from the past that trouble you. You, go home in peace."* In this blessed way, He reassures us of His forgiveness and strengthens our trust in Him as our Lamb. What greater proof of His wondrous love do we need? How precious this Lamb is to us!

Now we can look forward to the day when we have to appear before the judgment seat of a holy God. We can take that step with confidence and joy. Only because of the Lamb who was slain for us. The Father in His grace has washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Father in his wondrous love has made us His little ones through faith in His Lamb. We now look forward to the scene pictured in Revelation where we will sing eternal praises to such a loving Father and to the Lamb slain for us!

John describes those praises as golden bowls full of incense. Did you notice, though, how John encourages us not to wait till heaven to raise those golden bowls full of praise to the Lamb? We are to do it now. Listen to John. He says, ***"You [the Lamb] have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."*** Those words reveal that our God wants us to be up-and-at-'em now! He doesn't want us just to sit back savoring what we have in the Lamb but to be busy serving that Lamb. We are kings and priests who not only sing *"Oh, that we were there"* about heaven above, where we will reign with him in joy and bliss. While we are still here, we are to roll up our sleeves and get to work. We are to use our daily lives to spread the gospel message of the Lamb who was slain so He might truly also rule in the hearts of others with his love.

That's easy, isn't it, here in the safe confines—we might almost say cocoon—of our church? What about in our daily lives, out where *"the rubber meets the road?"* You know the places, don't you? In the workplace, where unbelieving employees sneer at our words and scoff at our actions. In the high school hallways and college classrooms, where people not so politely or tactfully try to scratch through the varnish of our protected childhood religion. On the hospital bed, where reality never takes a nap. In our families, where visually and verbally the love of God's Lamb needs to be conveyed. In our congregations, where there's always so much to be done and so few, it seems, to do it. In our synodical fellowship, where we together join hands to take the gospel to every nation and to train workers to go in our place. All this belongs in our golden bowls

of praise. Some would try to avoid such efforts. Others call it work and sacrifice. But we who love the Lamb slain for us also love to serve the Lamb.

What makes Jesus, the Lamb of God, so precious to us? Why do we love the Lamb? As God's little ones do we even have to ask? It's because of His wondrous love. In wondrous love our Savior did much more than wash the dirt and dust off of his disciples' feet! In wondrous love Jesus washed away all our dirty, dark sins with His blood. Yes, the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign. With sins forgiven, may we always be here at His service! Amen.