

I.N.I.

Maundy Thursday  
April 17, 2014  
Revelation 5:6-10

In Christ Jesus, whose name is wondrous love, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Why are little ones so attracted to lambs? Many may not have ever seen a lamb for real or stroked its soft fleece. Yet, in their beds, they clutch their stuffed lamb close as they fall asleep. Even after they have outgrown their child's bed, that lamb might still be on their dresser top, worn and torn but still endearing. What makes a lamb so attractive to children?

A Lamb is also attractive to us as God's children. 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.

### **Names of Wondrous Love—THE LAMB**

#### **I. Slain for us**

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John some 20 times calls Jesus, the Lamb. In our verses, he describes Him as a Lamb **AS THOUGH IT HAD BEEN SLAIN**. For the apostle, 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. **BEHOLD! THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD!** his teacher had proclaimed for all to hear (John 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 passed 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 also knew the meaning of the blood of all those hundreds of thousands of lambs 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 pay for all sin. Those covered by the blood of God's Lamb would be spared when God's eternal judgment passed over them.

In our verses we hear John further describing that Lamb as **IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE**. We might expect to find a slain lamb sprawling lifeless on the altar or on the stove. 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. He's also pictured as having seven horns and seven eyes. Those horns and eyes do not make Him into some unsightly, disfigured monster. Rather, the horns figuratively demonstrate His strength and the eyes His wisdom, times seven, so that we stand in awe and wonder at the almighty power and all-knowing wisdom of this Lamb.

So what's John telling us about the Lamb? Some of our churches have a symbol on the altar cloth 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 One who has slain our enemy. Not just a Lamb whose blood stained the cross on Calvary but One whose blood satisfied the penalty for all sins. Not just a Lamb who went silently to the slaughter but One who stepped out of the grave in victory over sin, death, and the devil. This Lamb has been slain for sin.

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. We need to 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 slain for MY sins. 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."*

The Lenten season is one of those times to pause in our daily hectic lives and to do some serious soul-searching. What does the Lamb slain for sinners mean to you? In answer we look especially at the blessed meal the Lord places before us this evening. 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 our sins on Calvary's cross. With His true body and blood, He wants to assure us of the blessed truth that He was indeed **SLAIN FOR US**.

At His altar He looks into our eyes, and speaks to our hearts and reassures us individually that He was slain for us. *He says, "Here is My body, given for you. Here, is My blood, shed for you. Your sins are forgiven, the ones you fall into so easily every day and the ones from the past that trouble you. Now, 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 will 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 own little lambs through faith in His Lamb. How we look forward to singing eternal praises to such a loving Father and to the Lamb who was slain for us!

## II. Served by 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, the Lamb has **MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS TO OUR GOD; AND WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH**. Don't those words give you the feeling that our God wants us to be ready for service now? He doesn't want us just to be looking forward to what we will have because of the Lamb but to be busy serving that Lamb now. 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 but 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 that He might also rule in the hearts of others with His love.

That's easy, isn't it, here in the safe confines of our church and of our school. But what about in our daily lives, out where "*the rubber meets the road*" and life is lived in cold, hard reality? You know the places----

In the workplace, where unbelieving employees may sneer at our words, scoff at our actions, or look upon our Scriptural advice as being pretty ignorant and naive.

In the school hallways and classrooms, where people try to tear down that Sunday School religion of ours with humanistic philosophy and evolutionistic teachings.

Out in society where we are tempted to hide our faith and not wear it openly on our sleeves.

At the doctor's office or in the hospital when we have heard bad news about our future health and our trust in Jesus is being attacked.

In our families, where the love of God's Lamb needs to be talked about and read about on a daily basis in our devotions.

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 fellow brothers and sisters 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 full of incense and praise.

Some would try to avoid such efforts. Others call it too hard of work and too great a sacrifice. But we who have been led to love the Lamb as One slain for us also look upon service for Him as our grateful, willing, loving response.

What makes Jesus, the Lamb of God, so attractive to us? As God's little lambs do we even have to ask? May we never put our Lamb up on the dresser top in our life, but always hold Him near and dear close to our hearts. Please, Lord, in Your grace make it so for each of us.

Amen.