

Sermon

The Cross's Victory

Pastor Lisa Giacomazza

Bacon Memorial Presbyterian Church

May 1, 2022

If you are one of those people who enjoys a good movie filled with good guys and bad guys, with the good guys chasing and catching the bad in the end with some type of bloody judgment where they get dragged away to their death...well you may not enjoy today's passage from Revelation. In this passage we encounter this vision of "myriads upon myriads – thousands upon thousands" of creatures, you and I included, and even creatures from the sea...altogether in one harmonious voice singing praises to God...one voice in and amongst all the chaos that is creation...one voice. There is no hierarchy present here – there is no good guys to the left and bad to the right. There is no talk of judgment. John's vision offers a comprehensive picture of inclusivity – which for those of us who keep tallies on right and wrong – those who do good and those who are evil – this may not be the judgment day we imagined.

In the vision we read today we get a glimpse of what God's final word will be – and it's not about division. This picture that our scripture paints today does not just include the creatures of the earth but those that reside below – and I mean way below- the depths of Hades – even those voices have found a voice to praise. This third Sunday of Easter gives us a chance to praise our loving God who reaches out not just to the upright but to all God's children, including the least, the lost and the lonely.

For those of us who work in professions where caring for those that society has all but forgotten about, these words are words to live by. Megan, whom I made her profession of faith today through her baptism, is pursuing a career in nursing. Not an easy calling but one so worth doing and we are all so thankful that she and others like her are answering that call. It is easy over time to lose our compassion for our fellow man and woman – to judge upon them as the world so often does – instead of offering them a kind word, a gentle touch, a meal, a bag of groceries. One thing we in healthcare are able to bear witness to is the power of God to work through our suffering for there is powerful consolation here for those who know brokenness.

This passage sends a great message of comfort to the broken. In all of our brokenness, we are never too damaged for God to use us. As we travel from the cross during this Easter season, we redefine what it means to “win” – this passage reminds us how the cross has changed our understanding of victory. Unlike our favorite movies, victory is not reserved for those who inflict or avoid wounding - victory is given *to* the wounded. We don’t win when we feel or seem better – better than the homeless woman we saw last night, better than your cousin who struggles with addiction, better than your neighbor because our garden is more beautiful, we’re smarter, thinner, richer – we are constantly looking to see where we stand against others but the truth does not exist in those judgments. The truth is only in God are we made worthy. Power in this world does not reside with those who appear most powerful – it resides instead with those who appear wounded and broken – like the Lamb. When we are broken down, we must turn to God. And we become stronger for it. We know we have resiliency – we have

felt pain to become compassionate and empathetic. There's real power in that. And we are all – every single one of us – invited to be part of the glorious choir of those singing praise and honor to God.

There is great celebration in these verses, and we will sing a new song. The song of inclusivity, the song of community that is equal, a song where we live together differences and all. This is the vision of our God – and it is our vision too. This is the Cross's victory!

“To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever! And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshipped.”

Hallelujah!