

REVELATION 5:8-14

BELIEVING IN GOD

When we talk about believing in God that can be easy for many people. Many people believe that there's a God out there, somewhere, doing something. However, as Christians we start narrowing down our belief, focusing on who this God is. Belief for us is more than knowing about the Christian God. You can be a history buff and know a lot of stuff about George Washington and believe that he lived in the past. Belief for us is about trust in our heart that this God whom we believe in can do something for us. Psalm 37(:5) tells us to commit our ways to the Lord, and to trust in Him, and He will act.

As we look at our text from Revelation today, we look to see this God whom we believe in, and contemplate what it is that we do trust in Him to do for us. How does He act when we trust in Him? Trying to look at God and grasp Him is hard at the simplest of times; trying to look at Him through the lens of Revelation is harder. When you read this book don't think of it as a literal description of things. It's painting a picture, but it's more of a symbolic picture. Think of a stained-glass window. Look at the window and marvel at it in wonder. Don't try to explain every last detail, every coloured square, triangle and squiggly mark, but rather look at it to see the bigger picture of God, Jesus and His creation.

Within this picture that we look at today there's God, Jesus, all of creation, and a choir. The choir starts off singing as a small group of twenty-eight, but then 100 million angels join in, and finally all of creation is singing, "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever! Amen!"

And that's where we begin, not at the end of the song, but at the beginning, at the throne, and with Him who sits on the throne – God almighty. The first article of the Apostles' Creed that we look at today is a statement of faith, of what we believe, teach and confess. When you read it in church you're saying – "I believe in God the Father Almighty Maker of heaven and earth." And that's all here in our reading from Revelation.

Right before our text Jesus has gone up to the throne of God Almighty and He took a scroll from God's right hand. Don't worry about the scroll, that little white coloured square in the stained-glass window. Focus on God, and Jesus. God is the Father of our Lord Jesus, and He's also our Father through Jesus. Galatians 3(:26) tells us that in Christ Jesus we are all children of God, through faith.

Take a close look at your Father, who's also the Father of all people, because He created them. He created them; He created you; in six days He created all things out of nothing, simply by His Word. When we think about

that we often restrict our thoughts to trees and birds, the earth, this planet and the universe. Our reading begins with four living creatures in heaven. What are they? That's like asking, 'What's that blue triangle in the stained-glass window?'. Maybe it's something specific, maybe it's nothing by itself. But with other things it makes up the picture. They make up the choir. Some think they represent every living being who's now in heaven. Who they are is not the point. That God created them, and that they're singing praises to God is the point. Listen to their song, and see God your creator.

"Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God" (v's 9-10).

Why do we sing in church? We sing to praise God. This choir in our reading is praising God, and Jesus the sacrificed Lamb and our resurrected Lord. You might think that this is all about Jesus, and we could focus a lot of our attention on Jesus, in fact I'll turn to Jesus shortly, but first we need to establish who this song is directing praises towards. The first verse begins, "Worthy are You" – meaning Jesus. The second verse begins, "Worthy is the Lamb" – meaning Jesus. The third and final verse, the crescendo, begins "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb" – meaning God the Father and Jesus.

This song is pointing to God the Father, and what He had done through Jesus. This is about praising Him who sent Jesus to do what He did, which was stated in the first verse – by Jesus' blood He ransomed people for God. By Jesus' death on the cross Jesus bought you back from the punishment for your sins so that you might be children of God your Father. And just as you become children of God through Jesus, this song praises God through Jesus.

To see this growing choir of praises to God let's turn to Jesus' words that point back to God the Father. We'll take these words from the Gospel of John, because John wrote the book of Revelation. So we look at all of this through the eyes of one author, one choir director, one stained glass painter. We're looking for a clearer picture of God. We want to see the picture in Revelation, what John wants to show us, yet firstly let's see how our author paints when he paints a little more clearly.

The Gospel of John is full of this phrase, "Him who sent Me". We'll look at three occurrences in three different chapters. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life" (5:24). "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day" (6:44). "Whoever believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent He" (12:44).

Belief in God is what's important. Believing comes from Jesus' words or hearing about Jesus. God draws you to Jesus, and if you believe in Jesus you believe in God. And believing in God and Jesus leads to eternal life – being raised up on the last day.

Back in our text when you heard about, or imagined hearing the creatures singing praises to the Lamb they're actually praising God the Father who sent the Lamb to ransom people from every tribe and language and people and nation. Can you see God now? God the Father Almighty sent Jesus to save everyone on the earth that He created. First you hear four living creatures praising God in heaven, and then you hear praises about the Lamb sent by God to ransom a series of four groups: tribe, language, people, and nation.

When you hear these two fours together think of the four corners of the earth. People from the four corners of the earth are already in heaven praising God for sending the Lamb. This Lamb, Jesus the Christ died on the cross to pay for the sins of all people from the four corners of the earth, us here now, those in Argentina, Australia, and Russia, and all parts in-between. Yes, God sent Jesus to die for all those people too, whomever "those people" are, even if you happen to think that Jesus didn't die for them.

The more you look at this stained-glass window the more you'll see. Did you see the many angels praising God. God created them too. Our reading says myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands. If you do the math translation you get 100 million angels. Can you wrap your mind around looking at 100 million singing angels? Do you believe God created all of these angels to watch over you and protect you? That's what you're confessing when you say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." God made powerful angels to help you.

And God made you, the most important visible creatures on earth. You were made in the image of God with authority over the rest of all creation. God gives you food, clothing, house and family, and all that you need from day to day. God not only sustains all things by His wisdom and power, but He also defends you against all danger and guards and protects us from all evil, all because of His Fatherly divine love, goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us.

For all of this, and for the Lamb who was sent by God, who ransomed us by His blood on the cross it is our duty and our joy to thank and praise Him as all those do in our reading. The last verse of the song includes the praises of all those in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and even in the sea. This is where we join in with those in heaven singing, "To God on the throne, and to Jesus the Lamb, we give thanks because Your love, honour and glory endures forever. Amen!"