

Christmas Eve (2018)
Text: Revelation 19:6-8
Theme: Singing With Saints And Angels

1770

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come.
Revelation 19:6-8 In the vision God granted him of heaven, the Apostle John describes:
Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteousness of the saints.)

May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer!

Dear fellow redeemed by the Christ-child,

One of my fond memories of Lutheran high school is singing in the traveling choir. Singing at the area churches was a privilege. More spectacular was the National Choral Festival, where all of our WELS high school choirs from across the nation sang together. The year I was in it, it was held in Milwaukee. Hundreds of musical voices singing in harmony – What a glorious thing to be a voice sounding in such a group!

One of the blessings of having children who are musically inclined is that you get to relive the Choral Festival event through them, and with seven kids I guess I’ve attended way more than my share. Over the years I’ve been privileged to hear a number of Florida All-State Choirs sing, and one year the National WELS Choral Festival at New Ulm, Minnesota, which included all of the high school traveling choirs, and also the Martin Luther College choirs. The sound of a great choir is breath-taking, sends chills up and down the spine, makes the heart skip a beat and the eye shed a tear, as for a few minutes you are enraptured in sound and song, and carried away by that choir, with that choir, and nothing else in life seems to matter.

In our verses from the end of the Bible, Revelation 19, we are at a concert. We hear a greater choir, the greatest choir, the sound of which enraptures us not just for a few minutes, but forever. Not just for a few minutes, but forever, nothing else matters. For this choir has everything to sing about. “The Lord God Almighty reigns,” the God who has won our salvation in Christ the Lamb, who takes away the sin of the world. He has made us his bride, “holy, cleansing her by the washing with water (baptism) through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” [Ephesians 5:26,27]

Who is singing in that choir? It is made up of all the angels of heaven. It includes all the saints who have lived on earth from the day of Adam until the end of the world. It includes Zechariah. It includes Mary. It includes Simeon. It includes you, and it includes me. A greater rush than hearing a great choir sing, is singing in a great choir. That is our eternally glorious privilege, to sing in this choir with saints and angels!

But some of you will say, “I can’t sing. I’m tone-deaf. I can’t for the life of me hit the right note or even carry a tune. I’m off-key. How can I sing in this heavenly

chorus?” But some of you will say, “I can’t praise the Lord as I should.” Some of you will say, “I can’t serve the Lord as I should.” Some of you will say, “I cannot obey the Lord as I should.” Indeed we all must confess, “I have not and I can not praise, serve and obey my Lord as I should.” We all wish we could sing better. How can we sing in that heavenly choir?

Christ the Lamb has made us his bride. On the cross he has taken away all of our faults, all of our shortcomings. Giving us fine linen, bright and clean to wear, he has made us pure and holy in his sight. Our voices to him are sweet, dear, and glorious, as even now we praise, serve and obey him.

You children, what a boundless privilege you have to praise your God here tonight, and week by week at church, and day by day in your lives, to sing with saints and angels! And for us old people, what a boundless privilege we have to praise the God of our salvation in his holy Church on earth, which, though separated by a short time, is already a part of the glorious eternal church of heaven.

One day soon, no matter how tone deaf we may be now, no matter how lacking in service we have been, no matter how disobedient we yet remain, we will be perfect in heaven. We will sing with perfect voices, we will serve with perfect hearts, we will obey with perfect lives, all because of the Christ-child, who lived for us, who died for us, who rose from the dead for us. How glorious that will be! How glorious it is already now to sing with saints and angels!

Amen.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.