

Stained Glass Stories
Triumphant Lamb
Thirteen Sunday After Pentecost
September 8, 2019
115 Years of Legacy Celebration
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

Revelation 5:11-14 (NRSV)

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² singing with full voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing,

“To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might
forever and ever!”

¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

When I started this sermon series last month, I thought, “how am I going to fill 6 weeks with this ‘little idea’?” Today – I think, “I could go on for months!” There are a lot of lessons in our stained glass windows. A lot of lessons swirling around us – windows and saints and sermons and more lessons.

Our sainted Rev. Glenn, back in the 1960’s, visited with Stowell Sandmeyer, also a Methodist pastor, who had been working on the stunning glass in the Air Force Academy chapel. Between the two of them, a vision became real, not only bring light into our sanctuary, but bring The Light of Christ for us TO SEE!

If you have read our little book about the windows, or have been part of the test-run for today’s tours, you know that the first windows to be placed were the two in the chancel. The windows on the west wall (your right) were installed a year later.

All of the windows have their personal history because they were dedicated in memory of an ACTUAL *someone* who sat in these pews. Perhaps you knew them.

Those people, along with the vision of Revs. Glenn and Stowell, left us NOT ONLY these windows but a legacy of ministry.

115 years of legacy in ministry.
We're celebrating that today.

For several months I've scribbled notes about the topics that are depicted in our windows. I thought, "Surely I'll get to a message about the Good Shepherd or the lost sheep.

Those are familiar, aren't they?

Here's a glimpse of how I prepare a message.

I think I've got a good idea.

I think "I'll go this way...and flesh things out *this way*."

But God...

But God turned me to the verses in Revelation that Mel read for us.

I wanted to focus (at least a bit) on celebrating.

Maybe read an *ascent psalm* of the people coming to the Temple with celebration and anticipation of worship.

I'd build on celebrations throughout Scripture.

Yeah, that's WHAT I'LL DO.

But God...God knew better for us today.

But, isn't our Good Shepherd window impressive?

We could do messages on THAT window for weeks!

But God...wanted me to turn OUR attention to the center window on the west wall.

God wanted us to hear about the Triumphant Lamb depicted there.

We've all had enough Sunday School to know that a lamb is defenseless against any enemy and when taken from the flock, a lamb has a very low survival rate.

Why, then, is the lamb the ultimate symbol of Christ?

God knew the review we needed.

In Genesis, God asked Abraham to sacrifice his own son.

On the way to the altar, Abraham said to Isaac, *"God will provide the lamb for a burnt offering"* (Genesis 22:8). And God did. Abraham sacrificed a ram. The verses around this event introduced the notion of the lamb, provided by God, as the perfect sacrificial offering.

A lamb is present throughout salvation history.

Turn the pages of your Bible and you'll remember the life-saving significance of the sacrificial lamb in the Book of Exodus, when God instructed the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb at the Passover.

Further along in the OT, Isaiah declared that God's servant would be, *"oppressed, and...afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth"* (Isaiah 53:7).

These incidents in God's Word were preparing God's people for the coming of the True Lamb.

Now, fast forward to the NT when John the Baptist proclaims, when he sees Jesus, *"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29)

We know, don't we, that Jesus went on to fulfill the role.

We know that Jesus remained silent and defenseless during his persecution.

He went to his death without any hesitation.

It is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the True Lamb, that Abraham was referring to, that opens the gates of Heaven and showers world with a flood of grace. Jesus Christ is the Lamb whose sacrifice frees us from the bondage of sin and DEFEATS death.

Oh, what a contrast!

An animal known for its weakness becomes a symbol of strength, of conquering evil through the ultimate sacrifice of his life.

But wait!

There's more!

The Lamb shows up again in the last book in God's Word. In Revelation, though, the Lamb is a symbol of strength, "*standing, as though it had been slain*" and the focus of all heavenly worship.

Too often we avoid John's Revelation because of all the symbolism – lions and lambs, beasts and serpents, elders...oh my!

Some people study Revelation looking for the timing of Jesus coming back – which IS going to happen, and we'd BETTER be ready – but that's not for today.

Our concern, today, is catching a glimpse of the other side of Christ's death.

We agree, a lamb is something timid, right?

We expect triumph from lions, not from lambs.

But, in Revelation, the writer sees a lamb which is a deliberate juxtaposition of might and meekness:

"Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb, standing as if it had been slaughtered. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth."

(Revelation 5:6)

Look at our window.

See that the lamb is holding a flag?

When you see this Christian symbol – a plain ole lamb holding a flag, you can be sure to know that it is the (here's some Latin for you) "Agnus Dei – Latin for "the Lamb of God" that John the Baptist told us about.

This Revelation Lamb is NO ordinary lamb. It is Jesus Christ himself!

Our window doesn't show the wounds that John wrote about.

Our window is the "what's next."

This Lamb, who has been slain has triumphed!

This Lamb is standing near the throne of God, among the elders.

He HAD BEEN slain, but now is standing, it says. HE is ALIVE.

And what happens next?

That Lamb goes to the Throne and takes the scroll from the right hand of the One seated on the Throne. And everyone in the throne room begins to worship the Lamb.

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered" we hear Mel read earlier.

"...to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

See.

God knew better what we needed to hear today.

About THIS particular stunning stained glass window.

About The Lamb – the Triumphant Lamb!

And, oh praise You God, about celebrating!

The legacy of this little church on the corner of 30th & Pikes Peak...

...that has witnessed silently, because it's brick and mortar, the births and baptisms, the confirmations and marriages, deaths and celebrations of lives of the people, our blood families who made up THIS family of faith...

IT, this place, is silent.

BUT WE CANNOT BE!

We must celebrate the Triumphant Lamb.

Because this, Dear Ones, is OUR legacy of ministry for coming generations.

We – and please GET that YOU ARE part of this – we are God's people referred to as "saints."

The Greek root meaning is: "*pertaining to being dedicated or consecrated to the service of God, dedicated to God, holy, sacred, reserved for God and God's service.*"

Referring to people, it means, "the holy ones, believers, loyal followers."

When I refer to "saintly" Rev. Glenn, or to our dearly departed as a "saint" – or when I say "Oh you ARE a saint!" I'm not calling you or them saints because we're perfect, but because we have **been made holy by Christ**, The Triumphant Lamb. We've been sanctified or "set apart" for God's own service and use.

You and I are these holy ones, dedicated to God's self.

THAT will be our legacy!

And so we can sing!

In celebration – we can sing!

We know the Lamb who was slain...the one worthy to open the scrolls of Revelation!

We can praise Christ, the Triumphant Lamb, that he saved us to be HIS.

And we add our song of celebration to all the saints in heaven!

Doesn't matter if you can't carry a tune in a bucket – don't give me that excuse!

Sing because YOUR LIFE MATTERED so much that God sent the Lamb to the slaughter...and to them, "*the One seated on the Throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!*"

And (it says it right here) all in the Throne room said: AMEN!