

Rev. Shaun Arndt  
Sunday, September 29, 2024  
Revelation 5:6-14

*Learn from the song of the Angels*

*Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come.*

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

I recently attended a special event at our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. During the closing worship in the gym/auditorium, 500 pastors and seminary students along with organ, brass and timpani belted out one of the hymns so loudly that water in a water bottle on a chair in front of me rippled, shook and made little waves, so great was the sound. That was just 500 men.

At the sound of those honor guard angels in our first lesson, the Prophet tells us the stone foundations and cedar doorways of the temple in Jerusalem shook at the sound.

Can you imagine then, what it was like, when the Apostle John **heard the voice of many angles... ten thousand times ten thousand!** If that number is to be taken literally, that's *at least* 100 million angels! No wonder one old hymn says: "*Hark how the heav'nly anthem drowns all music but its own!*"

But this scene and song in our second lesson is not written just to overwhelm our imaginations, but to teach us. So let us **Learn from the Song of the Angels.**

Like many things in God's amazing creation, the angels are normally unseen by human eyes. And yet they are real. Angels are not people who have died, but they are powerful spirit beings whom the Lord created to carry out His will. They have appeared and served as God's messengers many times throughout history. Still today, the Lord sends them to guard and serve His people.

There are many angels. John witnessed **ten thousand times ten thousand** – the Greek word for this, sometimes used in English is **myriad**. **Myriads** can also simply mean a ginormous number beyond our ability to count.

The shepherds the night of Jesus' birth saw **a multitude from the heavenly army**. Some older Bible translations use the words "**the heavenly host**." Host is just an old English word for army.

And there are times the angels have indeed served as an army in the Bible. Like the time the angels appeared as chariots and horses of fire on the mountains to protect the

prophet Elisha. Another time, just one single angel stopped 185,000 Assyrian soldiers who were attacking Jerusalem in the days of good King Hezekiah, and event that even shows up in the archeological record.

The angels are no myth, but as real as you and I. However, they are far more glorious, for they have no sin. The angels who never joined in Satan's rebellion remain forever holy and blameless, seeing and reflecting the brilliant glory of the Lord.

We learn this in our lesson from Revelation when we consider the song of the angels: **I heard the voice of many angels who were around the throne and around the living creatures and the elders... With a loud voice they were saying: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.**

Here is the scene: In the front and center is the throne of God the Father and this Lamb who appears in our reading. Around that throne are **four living Creatures** who are described in Revelation 4. These **four living creatures** seem to be special honor guard angels of God, since they have much in common with the Cherubim who appear in the book of Ezekiel. They also have six wings like the angelic **Seraphim** around God's throne in our first reading.

Next around them are **24 elders** seated on thrones (Rev 4:4). In Bible times, **elders** led and represented their people. Later on in Revelation (Chapter 21) we have a reference to the **12 tribes of Israel** and the **12 Apostles**. 12 + 12 is **24**, a picture then of God's Church – including all the Old Testament believers alongside the New Testament believers –who all confess the same faith in Jesus, the promised Savior, the one whom all the prophets and apostles write about in the Bible.

Now finally, around this picture of the Church with its **prayers** to God, stand the countless legions of angels! And there's not a single word of complaint from them that they are in the "back row" so to speak. Nor do they hesitate to pick up and join in on the **new song** sung by the **elders** who represent the Church of all believers.

These majestic angels do not sing about themselves, or their power or their glory or their faithfulness to God. Instead, their praise, their focus is 100% on the **Lamb**.

And who is this **Lamb**? None other than the one of whom John the Baptist spoke, and Christians still sing his words throughout the world: **Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world** (John 1:29). Indeed, we hear that this **Lamb** was **slain**

and yet stands here alive and victorious! This is Jesus Christ, who gave shed His blood as the price that **bought** sinful mankind to restore us to God and then rose victorious.

Jesus is the **Lamb** who takes the **scroll** from the right hand of God from the throne, just as we confess in the Creed: “*He is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.*” And this **scroll** that only Christ can open stands for the rest of history and all that will happen until Jesus comes again glory. In other words, Jesus holds the future in His hands.

Even the strange sounding details fit Jesus perfectly Jesus perfectly: **The Lamb** has **seven horns**. Throughout the Old Testament, a “**horn**” – (think the horns of a mighty bull) – a **horn** is a symbol of power. Seven is used as the Lord’s number. So this Jesus born of Mary, who is the eternal Son of God, has all power and might, just as Jesus tells us in Matthew: **All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me** (28:18).

The **seven eyes** we are told represents the **seven**, or we might say, **sevenfold Spirit of God** – that is the work of the Holy Spirit, who is true God, (again the number seven), who is also described with seven gifts in Isaiah 11. Once again, then we see how this is Jesus, the Son from whom along with the Father, the Holy Spirit proceeds to gather and build up God’s people.

So then, we **learn from the song of the angels** how perfectly and purely they praise Jesus’ saving name: **Worthy is the Lamb who was slain**. They gladly and loudly join in what is called a **new song**. Psalm 98 explains just what this song is when it says: **Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him**. So in every way the angels sing of Christ’s saving work!

And that’s rather surprising. After all, the Bible makes it clear Jesus did not come into the world to save angels. Hebrews 2 says: **For surely he was not concerned with helping angels but with helping Abraham’s offspring** (16).

Instead, Christ came to save you and me, and our fallen human race. And we *need* saving, for we do not naturally sing this **new song** in our reading. We do not like the angels perfectly and purely always sing of Christ with our lips and lives, even though His saving work does benefit us!

On the contrary, we all came into this world singing what we could call the “old song.” The same old song of sour notes and scratching on a chalk board and high-pitched yowling that brought pain and death into the world – the old, old song of sin. This old song is our sin we inherited from our parents.

It is the sin in our hearts that obnoxiously repeats its single off key note of: ‘*me first,*’ and ‘*what will I get out of it,*’ and every other way our hearts croak out their inborn selfishness that wants things our way, instead of considering first how we might serve God and neighbor.

Even when we come here to worship the Lord, we have inside of us old sinful hearts that lead us to think of things other than Jesus and want to be more concerned that the worship service pleases me and what I like rather than that it gives honor to Christ and His Word and benefits my neighbor.

Our sin earns us only a place in hell’s chorus of weeping and gnashing of teeth with no way for us to get ourselves out.

And that’s why it’s not just amazing, but shocking that the angels sing: **Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.**

Do you hear the beautiful, stunning grace of God reverberating through that song?

Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords became the Lamb of Sacrifice to save us from self-centered selfishness. He perfectly put us ahead of Himself and laid aside His **power and riches** to be born poor and lowly in little Bethlehem. He set aside full use of His heavenly **wisdom** to learn and grow and serve in our place, living the sinless life we have not to give us the righteousness we need before God that we all lack.

Jesus, the God-man willingly yielded His **strength and honor** to be arrested and spit upon and nailed to the cross where He exchanged **glory and blessing** for suffering and the curse of God against every sin to free you and me from all that our sins have earned. All has been paid for and removed.

And now victorious over the grave, He stands before the throne, holding the **scroll** –the world’s history, something He used to bring you to a baptismal font and to faith in Him. He stands holding the future – your future and my future—He holds so carefully in His hand to do what He knows is best for you and to bring you to that heavenly celebration where we will join that **new song** with the holy angels and every believer from each **tribe and language and people and nation** in that place where we will be forever free from the old song and dance of sin, sorrow, pain and death.

**Learn from the song of the angels** just how amazingly good and gracious God is to us!

He **bought** us for Himself through the precious blood of Christ.

He surrounds us with angel companions to guard and protect us from countless dangers.

And so that we do not lose heart as we struggle beneath troubles and hurts of this broken world with all its attacks and dangers, He comes to us in His Word and lets us listen in to this bright and beautiful song that we He will one day bring us to join in glory!

What can we possibly say in response but: **To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever. Amen.**

*We confess our Christian faith using the Nicene Creed on page 162. The unseen things of Creation that we speak of in this creed include the Holy Angels.*