

**Sermon Text:** Psalm 149

**Occasion:** All Saints Day observed 6 Nov 2022

### **Singing a New Song**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you in the name of God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

*Praise the Lord!*

*Sing to the Lord a new song,*

*his praise in the assembly of the godly!*

*Let Israel be glad in his Maker;*

*let the children of Zion rejoice in their King! (Ps 149:1-2)*

Truly, truly, the praises of God should forever be in our hearts and on our tongues for all that He has done and continues to do for us. He has brought us to life in His creation. He has brought us from death to new life in Christ. And He is continually drawing us into His everlasting kingdom. The entire assembly, that is, the entire Church of God spanning heaven and earth is praising the Lord for the love He has shown to us. But Ps 149 tells us to sing to the Lord a *new* song. What is this song and how do we sing it? And for that matter, what is the old song that we have been singing thus far?

The old song, sung across heaven and earth, we find in scripture. It comes up in a few places explicitly, one being in the book of Revelation. It doesn't appear in our reading this morning from Revelation (7:9-17), but it does appear earlier in the book at Rev 4. Here we find the heavenly chorus ringing out,

*“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,*

*who was and is and is to come!...*

*Worthy are you, our Lord and God,*

*to receive glory and honor and power,*

*for you created all things,*

*and by your will they existed and were created.” (Rev 4:8c, 11)*

The heavens and earth burst forth with praise for God who has called them into being. By His Word, the Lord has made heaven and earth and everything in them. God has brought forth life itself that we may live in His goodness and love. Everything we have or see is something for which we can thank God. It is His creation, and without Him creating us we would not be able to enjoy His wondrous blessings.

Many of you will find the words of the song to be familiar. In the liturgy, the Sanctus occurs when we celebrate holy communion, we find this song being sung in recognition of the Lord's glory. We join the song of the angels in the service to declare God to be holy, holy, holy. He has called us forth into being and has enriched our lives with everything we receive day by day. But you might notice that the exact words of the Sanctus are not here. This is because the Sanctus comes more from Isaiah 6 than Rev 4. When Isaiah had his vision in heaven, he saw the true king seated upon the throne of heaven. The house of God was filled with smoke which were the prayers of the saints for their forgiveness and salvation. Around the throne were angels, flying around and crying,

*“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Sabaoth;  
the whole earth is full of His glory!” (Isa 6:3)*

Here Isaiah saw the glory of God, recognized the blessings he has received from the Lord, and he... Well, what do you think? What did Isaiah do? You might assume since the Sanctus comes up around when we are about to receive communion that the prophet thanked the Lord, and that was that—that he was perfectly comfortable in heavenly places singing with the angels. But this was not the case.

When Isaiah saw the holiness of heaven and the one seated upon the throne, we was in utter despair. He cried out, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips.” In the presence of God's holiness, Isaiah recognized his own unholiness. He experienced the full glory of God and knew he was completely undeserving of it. Isaiah was not comfortable singing with the angels because of the guilt he experienced over his sinfulness.

Likewise, we can come forward to receive the body and blood of our Lord and God present at this altar and think to ourselves: I do not deserve this. We have failed the Lord. He has worked all things for our benefit in His creation (Rom 8:28), praising Him as holy. And for this, we praise Him. Yet, when we dwell over what we have done in the creation, we do not count ourselves as worthy of singing alongside angels. We find much to mourn over. So, is this the new song we are to sing to the Lord? Are we to sing a dirge, a mournful lament of how our lives are corrupted in sin? That is the outcry Isaiah had.

God has mercifully brought us forth into the creation and we have mucked it up. The world was not meant to suffer our wars, bloodshed, and division. It was not meant to endure our heated arguments, neglect, or sexual immorality. The world was not even meant to have the sins we lock in our hearts like lust, hatred, or greed. These are the things we and others have poured forth into the world and problems we have not always stepped forward to solve. We too can say, “Woe is me! For I am lost; I am unclean from my iniquity and I dwell among those who sin daily.”

But this dirge is not found in our worship service. (Thank the merciful Lord.) The Sanctus is not followed by a dirge but prayers of repentance, praise, and thanksgiving. In the Sanctus itself, we immediately change the tune to welcome forward our Lord and God: Jesus Christ. (Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.) It is Christ who makes himself present before us in the communion meal. It is he who promises to bless and preserve us. We need not fear of being unholy for it is our Lord who makes us holy through the reception of his body and his blood. When we are in the presence of God, we are not afraid of God's wrath. We are celebrating that our Saviour has come to deliver us from sin and death, cleansing the household of faith that he enters. He makes us holy for he is holy.

The new song that the Church sings across heaven and earth is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving for our Lord Jesus Christ. He has saved us from our sins and brings us into life everlasting. We find this shift in the book of Revelation. The hymn of all creation does not stick on the creation but changes in recognition that God has done something for His creation. He has reconciled the fallen creation back to himself through the blood of Jesus Christ shed at the cross (Col 1:20). This new song is proclaimed to Christ in Rev 5,

*“Worthy are you ...  
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,  
and they shall reign on the earth.”* (Rev 5:9-10)

Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. This is a familiar truth that needs to be sung every time you receive communion, every time you worship, when you pray, and whenever you are faced with your own sin. Whatever the circumstance you happen to be in, Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. You are not lost. You may have been dirtied with the plague of sin. You may live in the midst of people who sin much. But Christ has died for your sins and theirs (1 John 2:2). A dirge is not found on our lips in light of this glorious truth because we have the absolute assurance that those who die in Christ die in holiness. They are not lost but united with their Lord forevermore. Though they have died, yet they still live (John 11:25).

The song praising Jesus for ransoming his people by his blood is constantly sung in heaven. This precious fact never ceases to be true. We may reserve our voices for worship services—though we should also be singing the praises of Christ constantly—and the heavenly choir sings about Christ crucified at all times. United with them through Christ, we give thanks not only for the life we have in God's creation. We give thanks for the new life the whole Church receives in our re-creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). The only difference between the members of the Church who

sing of Christ here is that we do so in flesh we need transformed, while the members who have gone to God's throne are awaiting their flesh to be raised from the dust.

The entire Church of God in heaven and on earth now waits with eager expectation for the time when Christ will put all evils beneath his feet. We know the victory is won at the cross but we await for when the victory works itself out within the creation. We wait until the destruction of sin and death in this world is complete. This will be brought about when the final judgment comes. When Christ descends and the dead are raised from their graves. Those in Christ will be judged according to the holiness we received from our Lord. And those who are outside of this holiness will be judged according to their deeds and be found guilty of sin. The Lord will execute judgment rightly, removing every last evil from His midst and from us in heaven (cf. Ps 149:9).

In the Sanctus, a mix of the old song and the new, we shout out, "Hosanna," save us, O Lord. Deliver us, O Christ, from the sin and death of the world that threatens to harm your people. Protect us from the devil, the world and our sinful flesh. Bring to us the promises of life everlasting in holy communion. Take from us our guilt and shame by your blood. By your body, join us in mystic sweet communion to those who are in the body of Christ—those present and those who have gone before us in the faith. As we look forward to the paradise to come, we thank you, O Jesus Christ, for coming down here on earth because only through you may we be brought into your kingdom. Blessed are you who came in the name of the Lord. Let us remain in your name, O Lord Jesus that our going forth from your presence in this meal will find us always coming right back to you. Amen.

The peace that surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.